

Third Area

A Feminist Reading of Performance at London's
Institute of Contemporary Arts in the 1970s

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Details of collaboration and publications:

An earlier version of part of Chapter Two is published as: Eleanor Roberts, 'Restless Images: The Feminist Performances of Rose Finn-Kelcey', *Oxford Art Journal*, 38.3 (2015), 387-403

An earlier version of part of Chapter Five is published as the introduction to Eleanor Roberts, 'Daring to be Present: An Interview with Carlyle Reedy', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25.4 (2015), 561-72

ABSTRACT

Focussing on the 'long 1970s' (1968-1980), this thesis offers a new account of the emergence of performance forms, including Happenings, participatory art, performance art, and performances for the camera, in visual art and related contexts at the ICA. The research is driven by two central aims: firstly, to create space for discourse about women artists and feminist concerns in art in the UK, and secondly, to build a feminist methodology and historiography that allows for a re-thinking of performance events and approaches to interpreting them. My research involves methods drawn from performance studies, history of art and visual studies, cultural history, and feminist theory.

Chapters are organised around works by important UK-based artists including Carlyle Reedy, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and David Medalla, as well as international visitors Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman. Initially focussing on historical 'recovery' of performances by women artists in order to challenge received or dominant histories of performance, I then shift over the course of the thesis towards reflecting on feminist implications and effects of my historiographical approach.

Here the ICA functions as an organising principle rather than a central subject, and so while research begins with the ICA Collection held at Tate Archive, the scope of the study is also broadened to include other sites and archival repositories. As a methodological counterpoint to this, I also question and critique the limits of institutional and archival representation, and conduct interviews with artists and arts professionals.

Considered through the lens of each case study, I argue that the 1970s, as a period which saw new performance forms emerge dialogically alongside feminist practice, is a rich area of research for thinking about pre-histories of live art in the UK, as well as questions of identity, identification, and diversity which resonate into the present.

Third Area:

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Table of Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	5
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	7
Chapter 1 <i>About Time: The 'Women's Season'</i>	45
Chapter 2 Restless Images: The Feminist Performances of Rose Finn-Kelcey	93
Chapter 3 Love-Fucks: Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman	132
Chapter 4 Performance and <i>Prostitution</i> : The <i>Magazine Actions</i> of Cosey Fanni Tutti	171
Chapter 5 'Other Crusaders'	217
<i>Conclusion</i>	272
<i>Bibliography</i>	282
<i>Appendix</i>	301

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Allen Jones, *Chair* (1969)

Fig. 2. Rose Garrard, *Beyond Still Life* (ICA, 1980)

Fig. 3. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *The Restless Image: A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position* (ca. 1975)

Fig. 4. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *One For Sorrow Two For Joy* (Acme Gallery, 1976)

Fig. 5. Carolee Schneemann, *Naked Action Lecture* (ICA, 1968)

Fig. 6. Carolee Schneemann, *Naked Action Lecture* (ICA, 1968)

Fig. 7. Charlotte Moorman, *Instrumental Music* (stills from unpublished video by Fred Stern, *Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde*, 1980)

Fig. 8. Sho Kazakura performing *Stuff Comes from Somewhere and Goes Somewhere* (foreground), and Takehisa Kosugi performing *Chamber Music/Anima 2* (background) at the 15th Yomiuri Independent Exhibition, Tokyo (1963)

Fig. 9. COUM Transmissions, *Prostitution* (1976)

Fig. 10. Cosey Fanni Tutti as ‘The Office Cleaner’, one of the *Magazine Actions* (1973-77)

Fig. 11. Cosey Fanni Tutti as ‘Geraldine’, one of the *Magazine Actions* (1973-77)

Fig. 12. Carlyle Reedy preparing for *Fish Event* (Royal Court Theatre, London, 1970)

Fig. 13. John Dugger, *Star-Weaving Jig* (1972)

Fig. 14. *People Weave a House!* (1972) poster by John Dugger and David Medalla

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I thank my supervisor Dominic Johnson for his scholarly, professional, and personal guidance and support, which has been invaluable to writing this thesis.

I also thank all the artists and curators who agreed to be interviewed, for their time and for their important insights, including Anne Bean, John Dugger, Roberta Graham, Alexis Hunter, Lois Keidan, Sonia Knox, Sandy Nairne, Hannah O'Shea, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and Silvia Ziranek. I particularly appreciate the support and encouragement of Catherine Elwes at the earliest stages of my research, and – later – the generosity of Carlyle Reedy in illuminating much about her practice and early contexts of the 1960s and 1970s.

I have also benefited greatly from having the opportunity to collaborate with inspiring feminist scholars, artists, curators, and others as part of *Restock, Rethink, Reflect: Live Art, Feminism and the Archive* (September 2013 – January 2015), a research, dialogue and mapping project funded by Creativeworks London. I am particularly grateful to Lois Weaver, and also Lois Keidan and CJ Mitchell at the Live Art Development Agency, who led this project and invited me to collaborate with them.

I would also like to thank the staff and custodians of the various archives I have visited for their helpful assistance; particularly, archivist Adrian Glew for enabling me to access the hitherto uncatalogued Genesis P-Orridge Collection, Tate Archives.

Finally, I thank Queen Mary University of London and the Department of Drama for supporting this research with a Queen Mary Principal's Studentship award, and additional funding for image permissions for publications arising from my research as well as travel expenses.

Introduction

In summer 2015, I stood in a Bedford Row solicitor's office, looking at an old trunk; residues of time were visible over its chipped white painted surface, its locks were blotched with rust. The trunk was filled with an assortment of objects: a tube of tennis balls branded in an old font; a vintage portable radio flecked with dirt or possibly make-up; a white stiletto shoe; mismatched white and red elbow gloves; crumpled fabrics, unidentifiable scraps, glimpses of metal; and a faded navy t-shirt on a plastic hanger hooked over the trunk's open lid. The objects were carefully arranged to give the impression of a brimming jumble of meaningful things. The white glove was pinned to the blue polka dot fabric lining the inside of the trunk's lid, and it appeared slightly stuffed with something – giving a strange impression of being not quite filled with a hand, but stiffened by some other phantasmatic, lumpy occupant. The small enclave of a warm, stuffy, and crowded corporate space seemed an unlikely venue for this odd assemblage. A note on the wall read

Monica Ross (1950-2013)

Props and notes from *Fleur de la Lune* (and other performances) 1987

Performance artefacts¹

Ross was an artist among the pioneers of feminist art and performance in the UK from the late 1960s and 1970s, celebrated in this exhibition alongside peers including Rose Finn-Kelcey, Rose English, Sonia Boyce, and others, whose works have collectively been the subject of a surge of critical and commercial interest in London. Mystified as to the possible meanings of these objects, though, I looked for further clues, and noticed the glint of a paper clip holding together some hand-written notes. But, quickly stumped again, the notes were obscured by the

¹ *LIBERTIES: An exhibition of contemporary art reflecting on 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act* (Collyer Bristow Gallery, London, 2 July - 21 October 2015).

hanging t-shirt, and rendered unreadable. As I moved on, following the quickly moving jostle of the exhibition's patrons and potential buyers, I felt disappointed in myself that I had failed to decipher these traces of a performance, and I wondered how one would 'explain' these objects, which I experienced as allegorically foreclosed. How could I meet them in the middle - between my present time, and their history?

As a reader interacting with the feminist practices of women of previous generations, the material framing of Ross' 'performance artefacts' was not conducive to gaining an understanding either of the work - which attempted to resist the static art object - or the context into which it intervened. Divorced from any accompanying information about Ross' performance or its context, the work appeared as an assumed 'autonomous' object, and reaffirmed a *modus operandi* of the fetishised and static art and archival object. Here, I am not making a moral judgement about showing works in a commercial space - indeed, that women should be paid for their labour continues to be an urgent feminist project (and in any case, Ross' objects were among the few items listed 'not for sale'); rather, I am interested in the possible implications, effects or conditions of twentieth century feminist art entering into institutions which were previously hostile, or at best ambivalent, to artists, especially artists who are women, and others. Primarily, however, I look to explore the generative possibilities of historical transitivity, re-opening channels and spaces which continue to be shared between feminist histories.

There are two central imperatives driving this thesis; firstly, to create space for discourse about women artists and feminist concerns in art in the UK, and secondly, to build a feminist historiography of performance (which may include artists of all genders) that enables a rethinking of representation and interpretation in the 1970s and its continuing relevance to the present and future. The scope of the study covers what I refer to as the 'long 1970s', focussing on the years 1968 to 1980. This periodisation is necessary because it takes into account the late

1960s as the germinal context from which developments in collective feminist organising and artistic innovations in performance emerged symbiotically through the 1970s. Extending to include 1980, it also accounts for events at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts [ICA] which arose as a result of collective organising and lobbying of the preceding decade. The 1970s was a decade during which questions of identity occupied a position at the forefront of social, cultural, and political discourse and change, as feminist, trade union, student, and black organising, which emerged in the 1960s, continued to galvanize in force (even if in 'increasing articulation into relatively distinct ideological positions').² As Fredric Jameson has written, many such movements were modelled on, and indebted to, decolonization movements of the 'Third World' from the 1960s and earlier, including the 'symbolic Maoism' that was so evident in the arts and cultures of both the 1960s and 1970s.³ For instance, many of the most well-known feminist landmark events of the 1970s and beyond in the UK took the form of 'sit in' protests, such as during the strikes led by South Asian women (particularly Jayaben Desai) at the Grunwick film processing factory (1977-78), or later at the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common (1981-2000), but were preceded by similar tactics in black resistance practices in the US in the 1950s, for example. While the 1960s saw this 'politics of otherness', as Jameson puts it, radically brought into question,⁴ such investigations continued through the 1970s but in a new historical context in which, as Nicholas Ridout recently commented, 'capital

² Fredric Jameson, 'Periodizing the 1960s', *Social Text*, 9-10 (Spring - Summer 1984), 178-209 (p. 183). Here, I use the term 'black' in reference to cultural and political formations of the 1960s and 1970s spanning racial identities of black African, African diaspora, Asian and minority ethnic people (in the context of the majority white UK). As Eddie Chambers has summarised, there are a number of ways in which this is expressed, and 'black' is used in both upper and lower case. For my purposes, I use the common lower case throughout unless referring, for example, to Black British as a more specific category. Where I do not specifically refer to 1960s and 1970s organising (where 'black' is the preferred term), or 'black feminism' as a specific school of thought, I refer to 'people of colour', as a present convention. For a discussion of terminologies around black organising in the arts, see Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History Since the 1950s* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), pp. viii-ix.

³ Jameson, 'Periodizing the 1960s', p. 180.

⁴ Ibid., p. 186.

bites back'.⁵ Another factor that makes the 1970s such a pressing subject and context for historical study now is that, in addition to the increasing visibility of identity-based movements related to gender, race, and class, times of economic and structural crises (such as the 1973-75 recession or the energy crises of 1973 and 1979), coincided with explosive new forms of popular culture such as punk, and ensuing 'moral panic' (as conceptualised by sociologist Stanley Cohen) in the mainstream media.⁶ Andy Beckett summarises the 1970s 'mood' succinctly when he argues that

For many political people in Britain in the seventies, the time was dominated not by Heath and Thatcher and Callaghan but by the rise of environmentalism, or feminism, or the Gay Liberation Front, or Rock Against Racism, and other new forms of politics with their own rhythms and preoccupations, only sometimes connected to those of the House of Commons. In the London listings magazine *Time Out* in the early seventies, between the sections for children's activities and exhibitions, there used to be a section called 'Revolution'.⁷

While 'alternative' cultures and political organising were taking place, there was also a growing polarity between the political Left and Right, and 'new' cultures and historical institutions. As critic John A. Walker argues, the revolutionary spirits emanating from the 1960s would change in character, as the mood shifted from 'optimism to pessimism' (and I explain the aesthetics that arise from this shift in mood in relation to Cosey Fanni Tutti's *Magazine Actions* (1973-77) in Chapter Four).⁸ While I acknowledge that periodisation is a blunt form of compartmentalisation, which does not fully account for the dialogical relationships and lines of

⁵ Nicholas Ridout speaking at 'Performance and Politics in the 1970s', Whitechapel Gallery, 30 May 2015.

⁶ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, 3rd edition (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

⁷ Andy Beckett, *When The Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 5.

⁸ John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 13.

influence and practice drawn between other temporal and spatial locations, the ‘long 1970s’ here is also notable for the emergence of performance forms which intersected with more traditional categories of visual art in gallery contexts. Speaking at the turn of the millennium, on ‘Art, Activism, and Feminism in the 1970s’ Monica Ross remembered,

we turned out to strikes
and went on demonstrations
and took photographs
and shouted

Not the Church and Not the State

Women will decide their Fate

and by the time we got to Greenham

How to Protest

had become a performative public art form⁹

As Ross says, feminist organising and performance practices emerged symbiotically in the 1970s, and so the period ‘ends’ in this thesis in 1980 as performance practices by women gained mainstream recognition, concentrated in the context of the ICA ‘women’s season’.

Where many historical accounts of women and feminists’ formal experimentations in performance focus on activities emerging from the US and mainland Europe, I am interested in attending to histories of performance and women and feminist artists in the UK. This includes the work of artists who were born and based in the UK (such as Rose Finn-Kelcey and Cosey Fanni Tutti), but I also embrace the significance of influential visitors from the US (including Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman) in the late 1960s, as well as events

⁹Monica Ross, ‘History or Not’, performed at ‘347 Minutes... A Conference’ (Conway Hall, London, 2000), in conjunction with the Whitechapel Gallery exhibition *Live In Your Head* (2000). Text held at Women Artists Slide Library Archives, Goldsmiths, London.

relating to other peripatetic or internationally based artists (such as Carlyle Reedy and David Medalla). This is reflective of the spirit of conversation, sharing experience, knowledge, and expertise that was and remains so central to feminist practices, but also because I call for more scholarship in relation to the works of all these artists. In each instance, as the title of this thesis suggests, emphasis lies with my own feminist reading of each subject, as I seek to avoid misdirecting enquiries into establishing whether or not a woman or artist self-identified or self-identifies as ‘a feminist’, or whether there was feminist intent in the specific context of the 1970s. Rather, I am interested in asking what kind of urgent feminist interrogations their work enables today, and pursuing histories that challenge dominant patriarchal narratives.¹⁰

Significantly, this study explores the work of underrepresented women artists, but also attends to the interrelated work and histories of male artists. Particularly, David Medalla (a gay man) is discussed as an important figure in the development of participatory art and performance art in the UK, and works of other male artists such as by Nam June Paik, John Dugger, and Takehisa Kosugi are also included. Each of these artists made use of their bodies in live performance, in some cases incorporating differences of gender, race, ethnicity, culture or sexuality directly into their work as a subject or point of critique. By attending to works by women and men, I hope to avoid biological essentialism in deciding to which bodies feminist agency can be attached. Indeed, art critic and scholar Craig Owens (a gay male feminist) has written persuasively on the importance of coalitional politics, and making clear the ‘profound link between misogyny and homophobia’ which, Owens argues, is obscured by myths of gay male gynophobia, and latently or patently homophobic characterisations of feminist (assumed ‘feminised’) men, which affects

¹⁰ I refer to ‘patriarchy’ throughout in the knowledge that it is an inadequate, monolithic term which may detach or distract from individual culpability and the reality of multi-issue, intersectional configurations of power. However, I also harness the radical potency of the term precisely because ‘patriarchy’ illuminates the patriarchal ideal as monolithic; see bell hooks, ‘Understanding Patriarchy’, in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria, 2004), pp. 17-34.

social relations, including between men and women, gay, straight, and others.¹¹ Feminisms today must be intersectional, and the inclusion of these artists is not only relevant in speaking to issues of identity and identification, but also shifts the cultural and geographical centre of a study which is still limited in scope, but which at least acknowledges important activities outside of Europe and the US (I go on to discuss related issues of diversity in further detail in Chapter Five).

Performance and Pre-Histories of Live Art in the UK

As I have said, this thesis focusses on emergent performance practices which intersected with more traditional categories of visual art in gallery contexts. Within the historical and contextual scope of this thesis these are clustered around several key formal categories, all of which include the artists' use of their own bodies as a material. Performance art strategies gather in number and strength through the 1970s, particularly in relation to feminist art and its discursive frameworks – as I discuss in Chapter One, where I begin to tease out key themes and forms of the field. In Chapter Two, I pay closer attention to performance art forms which emerge in conjunction with conceptual and sculptural practices by focussing on Rose Finn-Kelcey's performance works. Happenings (referred to by Carlyle Reedy sometimes as simply 'events') arise from intermedia art forms in the 1960s, which I will discuss further in Chapter Three, and also in relation to Reedy's work in Chapter Five. Works which contain elements of recorded performance are also analysed here in relation to video and installation practices in Chapter One, as well as in Chapter Four, which focusses on Cosey Fanni Tutti's *Magazine Actions* and their intervention into formal and thematic areas of conceptual art. Participatory art, which

¹¹ Craig Owens, 'Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism', in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. by Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 218-35 (p. 219).

centres on dialogical relationships between artists and participants forming physical components of the work collectively, emerges from the late 1960s and through the 1970s – examined here in Chapter Five in relation to David Medalla and John Dugger’s collaborations. I catch all these formal groups together under the broad term ‘performance’ throughout, as an umbrella heading which denotes practices related to performance studies, and bodies in live performance which are outside of, or which challenge limits or boundaries between, for example, more traditional categories of theatre or dance. Together, they also comprise some of the pre-histories of live art, a formal category in the UK which is said to have emerged from the tail end of the 1970s, through the 1980s and beyond.¹²

In seeking out these pre-histories of live art in the UK, London’s ICA is a convenient starting place, as one of a network of UK venues which supported its formal development. Other key public venues in the 1970s and 1980s included the Arnolfini in Bristol, Museum of Modern Art Oxford (later renamed Modern Art Oxford), and Third Eye Centre in Glasgow. There were also a number of dedicated festival events or seasons – which the artists studied here also took part in – including the *Expanded Cinema Festivals* (ICA, 1973 and 1976), *Fluxshoe* (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1973), Southampton Festival of Performance Art (1975), *London Calling* (Acme Gallery, 1976, 1978), *Performance Art* festival at the Serpentine Gallery (1976) and the performance programme at the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham in 1977. There are innumerable other gallery and non-gallery contexts and venues which are crucial for understanding these developments, such as artist-led initiatives: in London this includes SPACE and AIR, Acme Gallery and Studios, Butler’s Wharf, artists’ communal live-ins such as the Exploding Galaxy and those at Beck Road, early venues for Happenings and performance art such as the Middle Earth club, and many more. Existing scholarship on early

¹² For further contextual information on definitions and pre-histories of live art in the UK, see Dominic Johnson (ed.), *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK* (London: Routledge, 2013).

precursors to live art in the UK has also shed light on events such as the Edinburgh Drama conference Happening (1963), the *International Poetry Incarnation* (Royal Albert Hall, 1965), and the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (1966). Heike Roms and Rebecca Edwards have detailed the prominence of these events in historical accounts of the development of live art in the UK, and their implications for categorisation and discursive framing of performance practices at intersections of theatre, anti-theatre, and visual art.¹³ Particularly in relation to *Destruction in Art* and related contexts, Kristine Stiles has also offered important new perspectives which highlight ways in which accounts of these events have frequently tended towards male-centred narratives, in part due to women's comparative archival invisibility or marginality.¹⁴

While less scholarship has been dedicated specifically to events at the ICA, it is particularly significant as a venue as, later, in the 1990s, an explosion of live art practices took place, catalysed by the important curatorial strategies of Lois Keidan and Catherine Ugwu (then director and deputy director of the Live Arts programme). The conclusion of this thesis is then haunted by the spectre of the regrettable closure of the ICA's dedicated Live & Media Arts unit, on the highly questionable assumption that – as then ICA director Ekow Eshun declared – this field “lacks depth and cultural urgency”.¹⁵ In profound resistance to this deeply problematic hypothesis, this thesis uncovers a rich history of performance at the ICA which, as we come into conversation with it across time, re-energises crucial, urgent debates happening today, not only in relation to art's relevance and relationship to society, but also to questions of form, innovation, identification, and diversity.

¹³ See Heike Roms and Rebecca Edwards, ‘Towards a Prehistory of Live Art in the UK’, in *Critical Live Art*, pp. 31-45.

¹⁴ Kristine Stiles, ‘Synopsis of the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) and Its Theoretical Significance’, *The Act*, 1 (Spring 1987), 22-31; Kristine Stiles, ‘Survival Ethos and Destruction Art’, *Discourse*, 14.2 (Spring 1992), 74-102.

¹⁵ Lyn Gardner, ‘Ekow Eshun and the ICA's death blow to live art’, *Guardian*, 23 October 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/oct/23/ica-live-arts-closure>> [accessed 18 March 2013].

The Institute of Contemporary Arts

Having detailed the significance of institutional support for emerging performance forms in the UK, it must also be said that this thesis approaches the ICA, but also institutions more broadly as structural phenomena, with a feminist criticality and scepticism about the limits of the mainstream gallery as contested ground in its usefulness for feminist change in culture and society. The ICA was by no means exemplary of feminist revolutionary approaches to the arts (as I will go on to explain). What it does offer is archival representation by which threads can be followed in learning more about artists, events, and artistic contexts which have for the most part received relatively little scholarly or critical attention. For this research, I attend primarily to the Institute of Contemporary Arts Collection held at Tate Archive, which includes administrative records, promotional, and other material from 1937 to 1987. For documents relating to events after this point, the ICA holds its own records (at the time of writing mostly held in storage and not generally available to the public), but I also note the ICA Live Arts 1992-1997 Collection at the Live Art Development Agency Study Room – which I also draw on. I also consult a range of other archives to supplement the ICA Collection; including other archives also held at Tate such as the Genesis P-Orridge Collection, those at other major institutions such as the National Art Library Information Files held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as the archive held by the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey (private at the time of writing).

Considered as traces of past events which enable materialist engagement with the subjects, the archival objects' ability to be 'read' and interpreted is situated at the centre of my feminist methodology – in opposition to their possible function as 'evidence' in a positivist sense, for example. Use of the institutional archive also presents a set of historiographical

questions and feminist concerns to be worked through in and of themselves. For instance, Jacques Derrida has made clear the symbiotic link between possession of political power, and control of institutional archives, charting the etymology of the word to the Greek *arkheion*: ‘initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded’.¹⁶ Archives are thus considered as tools of ways in which those with political or institutional power choose to represent themselves. Derrida continues:

It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret. [...] With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*. They inhabit this uncommon place, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in *privilege*.¹⁷

This and other critiques of archives as houses of ‘master’ social groups reveals a disjuncture between feminist uses of them as an interventionist strategy on the one hand; and on the other, investing further in archives as a means of institutionalisation, and repository of patriarchal and capitalist representation, and reification. I explore these questions further at a number of points throughout the thesis, and I consciously bring the ICA archive into conversation with other forms of variously ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ sources, ranging from other institutional archives where relevant materials are kept, through to less ‘authorised’ versions of historical documentation such as fallible memories of the artist and marginal anecdotes. I borrow here from a number of scholars undertaking historical research in performance and other fields who

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 2. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

have proposed such historiographical approaches, including Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Jane Gallop, Dominic Johnson, and most recently Holly Pester.¹⁸ As a counterpoint to the archive, I have also conducted interviews with artists and arts professionals as a means of gathering and interpreting information, but also as part of an overarching impetus of maintaining a multiplicity of voices in my discussion of the subjects. The ICA, then, functions here as an organising principle, rather than a central subject: the focus is on the artists, their histories, and the questions of feminist representation and interpretation that they pose and enable.

While the narrative of the thesis departs from the limiting framework of the ICA in strategic ways, it is nonetheless necessary to offer a brief account of the institution in order to gain a greater understanding of how the performance practices discussed throughout contribute or intervene into its institutional space. This is particularly true as the ICA's own accounts are shown to be incomplete or inaccurate, particularly in their published historicisation of feminist art and performance more broadly.¹⁹

The ICA's first year of exhibitions in 1948 began with *40 Years of Modern Art*, a selection of paintings and sculptures of which, out of a total of 83 artists whose work was exhibited, Barbara Hepworth and Frances Hodgkins were the only two women. Co-founder Herbert Read (who was primarily known as a poet, and anarchist cultural theorist) insisted on the impetus of the institution as being

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia [1979]', and 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography [1985]', in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29-52 and 203-36; Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002); Dominic Johnson, 'Marginalia: Towards a Historiography of Live Art', in *Critical Live Art*, pp. 13-30; Holly Pester, 'Anecdote, gossip and fiction as modes of aberrant research', Gender and the Archive: Conversations Across Disciplines and Practices conference, 30 January 2015, University of Roehampton.

¹⁹ For instance, the timeline of events produced in the commemorative ICA history publication *How Soon is Now* (2008) fails to list key events, or misattributes them, as in the case of *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1977) exhibition, which is incorrectly listed as being a solo exhibition by Bobby Baker; *How Soon is Now*, ed. by Ekow Eshun (London: ICA, 2008), p. 152.

not another museum, another bleak exhibition gallery, another classical building in which insulated and classified specimens of a culture are displayed for instruction, but an adult play-centre, a workshop where work is joy, a source of vitality and daring experiment.²⁰

Playing an equally prominent role in co-founding the ICA, critic and Surrealist painter Roland Penrose also reinforced the organisation's questioning of museological order by foregrounding experimentation as a central objective, in contrast to a limited notion of artistic 'achievement' represented, for him, by art academies.²¹ For both Read and Penrose, the ICA was to offer a point of difference to 'stagnant' arts institutions and their seeming reluctance to present an institutional platform for the experiments of emergent modernisms.²² The ICA archive shows, from the institution's inception, coherent strategies of supporting emerging arts and artists, and an organising (or, disorganising) principle of catholicity, widely inclusive of 'the new' in the arts (I will point out the limits of these strategies in Chapter Three). After the ICA gained its first semi-permanent venue at 17-18 Dover Street in 1950,²³ organisational energies were focussed on building networks of support and communication between artists and patrons at this 'club' type venue, rather than on acquiring and building its own collection. While the ICA resisted categorisation as a museum, neither was it a commercial space; though it aided artists in selling their works by offering a promotional platform and administrative support, the emphasis had never been directly geared towards market activities (Bruce Lacey recalls that in the late 1950s or early 1960s Dorothy Morland – then director – told him he could exhibit at the Dover

²⁰ Herbert Read, 'From *Forty Years of Modern Art* [...] Introduction by Herbert Read', typed document dated 1967 quoting the ICA's first exhibition's catalogue, TGA 955/2/2/7, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

²¹ Roland Penrose, 'Why I Am A Painter [c.1938]' <<http://www.rolandpenrose.co.uk/Painter.aspx>> [accessed 28 October 2013].

²² Read, 'From *Forty Years of Modern Art*'.

²³ Prior to this members of the ICA had been meeting and working at borrowed or rented temporary venues, including the basement of the Academy Cinema on Oxford Street.

Street ICA, which would offer him ‘prestige’, but he wouldn’t be able to sell).²⁴ Seeking a new venue which would allow for a more ambitious range of activities, ICA patrons and committee members decided to donate and sell works from their own collections in order to accumulate enough resources to acquire larger and more prominently located premises. After a number of works were sold at auction to raise the capital, lengthy negotiations with Crown Estates went underway, along with four other co-tenant societies, to secure their current venue on The Mall, which opened to the public on 10 April 1968. As I will explain in Chapter Three, this marked a new era for the ICA, including a massive increase in membership, media profile, and public funding.

While the activities at the ICA were customarily male-focussed, there are a number of women who were key to the ICA’s history and development. Though she is often cast as simply an ‘administrator’, from her arrival at the ICA in 1961, through to the move to Nash House, Dorothy Morland was an important and influential figure who underpinned much of the Dover Street activities.²⁵ She oversaw a number of important events at the ICA relating to early developments in performance, including a 1959 performance by French artist Jean Tinguely (which has been described by pop artist Richard Hamilton as pioneering the Happening form),²⁶ presentations by Yves Klein and Wolf Vostell, Fluxus events organised by Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, a notorious screening of Guy Debord’s *Provocation as a Film* which resulted in demands for refunds (and other myths affirmed by ICA historians such as that Debord was chased across the roof by angry mobs),²⁷ and Mark Boyle and Joan Hills’ pivotal Happening *Oh What a Lovely Whore!* in 1965. Jasia Reichardt, whose official title was

²⁴ Bruce Lacey interview with Gillian Whiteley, *NLSC: Artists’ Lives – Bruce Lacey* (2000) [audio], National Life Stories Collection, British Library, London

²⁵ Freda Paolozzi, ‘Obituaries: Dorothy Morland’, *Guardian*, 9 September 1999
 <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/sep/09/guardianobituaries3>> [accessed 13 January 2016].

²⁶ ‘Edited version of Richard Hamilton’s tape about *Growth & Form* Exhibition’, Dorothy Morland interviews, TGA 955/1/14/3, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

²⁷ Ben Cranfield, ‘Introduction’, in *How Soon is Now*, ed. by Ekow Eshun (London: ICA, 2008), pp. 10-29, p. 20.

‘Assistant Director’ (there was a tendency for women to be termed ‘assistants’ and ‘administrators’, perhaps undermining their roles), curated landmark exhibitions in the early years of the ICA at Nash House, including *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968) and *Play Orbit* (1969), which sought new definitions and remits for art exhibitions, focussing on technological science and cybernetics, and children’s play respectively. Other women who were influential during the 1970s and who either worked at the ICA or often spoke there included Caroline Tisdall (art critic for the *Guardian*),²⁸ and Sarah Kent (who was director of exhibitions for a time before returning to *Time Out*). There were also key male figures who were supportive of both performance and of women artists; for instance, Michael Kustow, the first director of the ICA at Nash House, attempted to expand the remit of the gallery to include a more diverse range of forms, public spaces, artists and audiences (as I explain in Chapter Three). Later, Ted Little was particularly praiseworthy and daring in his directorship as he was responsible for key exhibitions of performance and other works by women and feminists in the mid-1970s, most famously including Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* (1976), COUM Transmissions’ *Prostitution* (1976), and the Feministo group’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1977). At the end of the period Sandy Nairne, appointed as the new exhibitions director of the ICA in 1980, supported a committee of women artists in putting together an unprecedented ‘women’s season’ of work – as I explain in Chapter One.

Third Area

²⁸ Caroline Tisdall is an interesting figure who appears frequently in archival documentation relating to performance and feminist art in the UK in the 1970s. In addition to being art critic for the *Guardian*, she also wrote for *Studio International*, and held varying degrees of involvement and influence with key arts organisations such as Artists for Democracy, the ICA, Whitechapel Gallery and the Women’s Free Art Alliance. She also worked with the Welsh Arts Council as an organiser and selected the 1977 Wrexham Eisteddfod ‘performance art tent’, as well as writing critically on her friend Joseph Beuys. After the early 1980s she moved away from art and became more involved in environmental and conservation activities in more upper class milieu. Curiously, she is now a leading figure at the conservative and pro-hunting Countryside Alliance.

It is from this last point in time that the term ‘third area’ arises. Part of the ‘women’s season’ was the exhibition *About Time: Video Performance and Installation by 21 Women Artists* (1980), which defined itself as a collection of works by women in the ‘third area’, of time-based art sitting between other more traditional formal categories (as I explain in Chapter One). Its use in my title, then, denotes the formal scope, but it also signifies the theoretical framework of this thesis. Here, I refer to models of criticism and representation which move away from misleading binaries, such as identity binaries (of man and woman, subject and object, oppressor and oppressed), and towards mobile and pluralistic conceptions of identification. Homi Bhabha’s theory of a ‘Third Space’, which attends to that which exists ‘in between’ and in the ‘discontinuous time of translation and negotiation’ is particularly influential here.²⁹ Bhabha proposes that we ‘think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences’, and calls for attention to notions of ‘hybridity’ over diversity.³⁰ This model has also been proposed by other and earlier feminist interventions, such as Donna Haraway’s notion of the ‘cyborg’ body, which I draw from and discuss in further detail in Chapter Four.³¹ Another ‘third area’ produced by this thesis is in the temporal muddling between the ‘long 1970s’ and contemporary discourse. I am not interested in nostalgic modes of criticism which render the past in terms of their loss; rather, I am committed to what happens when these two contexts come into conversation. I argue over the course of this thesis that while the 1970s is often characterised as naïve, redolent with problematic assumptions of essentialism and other outmoded (potentially dangerous) feminisms, women and other artists were engaged in

²⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994 rpt., London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 2, 55.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 2, 56.

³¹ Donna J. Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century [1985]’, in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 149-81.

complex and self-reflexive modes of representation and interpretation which continue to call into question dominant patterns of thought.

Acknowledging the Gaps

I have outlined a rationale and scope for this thesis, and so before continuing I must acknowledge the inevitable gaps in my account. Particularly, this study repeats some of the shortcomings of 1970s organising and curating feminist art in the UK in that it does not include substantial discussion of innovations in performance by women artists of colour. As I explain in greater detail in Chapter Five, this is due to a number of factors including the absence, invisibility, or marginality of women of colour in the ICA archive, as well as institutional biases underpinning formal boundaries and perceptions of innovative practice. For instance, women of colour appear – if at all – as marginal or unnamed ‘performers’, as ‘actresses’ in plays by men, or as providing ‘entertainment’ in the form of music or dance (frequently ‘ethnic’ and of a foreign ‘tradition’). It is important to say from the outset that this in no way means that women were not working in performance or driving innovation in the arts more broadly in the UK in the 1970s; rather, it reflects institutional prejudice (archival and curatorial) and the limited scope of my study. In future research, a closer study of performance practices more broadly (which would include theatre and spoken word, for example) in relation to the Black British arts movement in the UK would offer greater opportunity for understanding women of colour’s performance practice during this time. Additionally, the historical scope of this thesis is also limiting in this respect, as particularly in the 1980s and 1990s women artists of colour such as Mona Hatoum, Sonia Boyce, SuAndi, Kazuko Hohki, and Susan Lewis (subsequently known as Subassa Imani Lewis) were influential and increasingly visible, as their works were driving forces in the development of live art in the UK. Similarly, there are other intersections of

identity or identification and innovations in performance such as relating to disability, for example, which are not explicitly addressed here because of the scope of the study. While the thesis does not discuss works which deal directly with representations of black womanhood, lesbian sexuality, or transgender issues for example, as a subject (due to their lack of representation in the ICA archive), queer feminist and feminist of colour theories offer important and profound perspectives throughout.

As I have explained, there are many inevitable gaps in this thesis, and a number of important artists who are not discussed at length because of the institutional organising principle of the research. For instance, Anne Bean is an influential artist who relocated from South Africa to the UK in the late 1960s; her performance works, which emerged from sculptural and sound contexts, are not discussed as she did not show at the ICA (though it is possible that Bean may have shown work as an unnamed collaborator in the Kipper Kids' performances there in 1972 and 1976). Another influential UK artist during this period is Monica Ross. Again, she is not present in the ICA's archival representation during this time, although she did participate in Feministo's *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife*, which I discuss briefly, and which has been the subject of other, more extensive research.³² There are other notable women who pioneered live and recorded performance forms which intersected with more established visual art categories in the UK who did perform work at the ICA in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, but are not discussed in any detail here. For example, Joan Hills and Jill Bruce presented work in collaboration with their partners (or then-partners) Mark Boyle and Bruce Lacey respectively. Shirley Cameron is another significant artist working in this area, whose works are represented at the ICA during this time, but within the context of works by other people, including a performance by Carlyle Reedy (as I explain briefly in

³² For an account of *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* exhibition, see Alexandra Kokoli, 'Undoing "Homeliness" in Feminist Art - *Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1975-7)', *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, 13 (January 2004), 75-83.

Chapter One). Additionally, Rose English, Sally Potter, and Jacky Lansley all showed work as part of the *One Man/Woman Show* (1976) series, which – again – requires further study.

While these examples are barely present in the ICA archive, I note that this in itself does not preclude them from being objects of study (and I begin to work through archival marginality and possible aesthetics of slughtness, throughout, but particularly in Chapter Five). Rather, I have opted to pay greater attention to fewer case studies as representative of key formal and thematic areas, which allows for greater depth in my discussion. Indeed, depth of engagement is important in the context of historically underrepresented artists or practices – though in Chapter One I negotiate this with the breadth of group show participants of the ‘women’s season’.

Within the same formal categories in the 1970s, but who did not show, or who showed work later at the ICA, are influential UK artists Jo Spence, Helen Chadwick, and Tamara Krikorian, and important international visitors such as Yoko Ono. These were part of a wider milieu of women artists who did not necessarily work directly with their own bodies, in which case they are outside of the formal scope of this study, but who are nonetheless notable for their innovations in feminist art in the UK in the 1970s, including Judy Clark, Margaret Harrison, Mary Kelly, Monica Sjöö, Kate Walker, Annabel Nicholson, Susan Hiller, Linder (Linder Sterling), and many others. There are also important performance-related activities happening outside of the limited formal scope of this thesis, such as feminist groups more closely associated with theatre and more established theatrical forms including Hesitate and Demonstrate (co-founded by Geraldine Pilgrim and Janet Goddard), Beryl and the Perils, Monstrous Regiment and Cunning Stunts to name but a few, who all presented shows at the

ICA at this time.³³ Then, there are women working more closely with dance and the recording and performance of music, particularly black women such as Didi Sydow and Peggy Phango (who did show work at the ICA) and Terri Quaye (who it appears did not). Later, the 1980s saw the rise of the Black British arts movement, and the increasing visibility of women artists of colour such as Lubaina Himid, Sonia Boyce, Maud Sulter, Sutapa Biswas, and Mona Hatoum in visual art institutions including the ICA, which also requires closer study in an expanded historical and formal framework.³⁴

Literature Review

In her essay 'Feminism Unbound: Revolution, Mourning, Politics' (2002), Wendy Brown argues:

The contemporary Euro-Atlantic Left is in mourning not just for the idea of revolution as a political modality, but for two particular revolutionary dreams that died in the last quarter of the twentieth century. One, very roughly, could be called socialist. The other, equally roughly, could be called feminist and sexual.³⁵

Revolution, including feminist utopian revolution – which, she says, sought to overthrow gender as a marker of difference and locus of inequality – is now rendered both anachronistic and potentially dangerous.³⁶ Brown charts this shift alongside changing historical contexts, from the modernity of the twentieth century, to the increasingly neoliberal present, which she

³³ Archival information and accounts of feminist theatre groups can be found at the Unfinished Histories project, <<http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/history/companies/hesitate-and-demonstrate/>> [accessed 21 December 2015].

³⁴ Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art*, pp. 128-37.

³⁵ Wendy Brown, 'Feminism Unbound: Revolution, Mourning, Politics [2002]', in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 98-115.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

characterises by its dispersal of social powers, new technologies of organisation and intelligence, and the rise of moral fundamentalism.³⁷ Brown is among the prominent feminist scholars who offer insightful analyses of the shortcomings of a (now dead) dream of feminist revolution – particularly the way in which politically liberal ‘second wave’ (especially ‘anti-porn’ or ‘anti-sexual’) feminisms served to reify gender difference, to consolidate rather than disrupt ‘identity’ (particularly in relation to lesbian separatism and feminist nationalism, Brown argues), and marginalised ‘Third World and Soviet bloc’ feminisms.³⁸ With the failed project to escape it, gender is now, Brown writes, ‘regarded (and lived) by contemporary young scholars and activists raised on poststructuralism as something that can be bent, proliferated, troubled, resignified, morphed, theatricalized, parodied, deployed, resisted, imitated, regulated... but not emancipated’.³⁹ In stark contrast to broadly ‘revolutionary’ utopianisms (and, indeed, dystopianisms) arising from 1970s feminisms, Brown suggests that present states of mourning might be harnessed to develop ‘postrevolutionary modalities of political thought and practice’ and revive the quest for feminisms ‘beyond sex and gender’.⁴⁰

It may seem that I collude with anachronistic or nostalgic modes of retrospection, then, to focus my research on 1970s feminist histories. In order to construct a discursive framework for performance practices, I draw on a number of critical and scholarly feminist texts which were contemporary of the 1970s period, namely those of the ‘second wave’, which span Marxist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist schools of thought. The breadth of very different sources ranges from US feminist Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970),⁴¹ to French feminist writings of varied schools, such as those by Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva (who

³⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 109-10.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

⁴¹ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case For Feminist Revolution* (1970 rpt., London and New York: Verso, 2015).

draw from psychoanalytical traditions) on the one hand, to Monique Wittig (who advocated a radical political lesbianism) on the other, *and* the ‘Third World’ feminism of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, particularly her theorisations of marginality in critical theory and the historiography of the subaltern.⁴² I explain them and my usage of them in further detail in each instance, but I pause to note here that I deliberately seek to bring a number of historically divergent feminisms into conversation over the course of the thesis, drawing on the coalitional mode proposed by Donna Haraway, which I explain in greater detail in relation to her essay ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century’ in Chapter Four.⁴³

While acknowledging the importance of her summary of the ways in which (identity-based) feminisms of the 1970s have since been criticised for their shortcomings, my research can be located differently to Brown’s in that it follows recent feminist theories which seek to draw from and reappraise, or rework, conceptions of identity, or – more accurately – identification. However, rather than nostalgically or anachronistically propping up historical feminisms, it works to strategically place different histories in conversation with one another. This is informed by queer feminist theories of leading scholars of histories of performance, literature, and art, particularly: José Esteban Muñoz’s notion of queer futurity, of ‘a backward glance that enacts a future vision’ outlined in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009);⁴⁴ Elizabeth Freeman’s theory of ‘temporal drag’;⁴⁵ and Amelia Jones’ concept of

⁴² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Explanation and Culture: Marginalia [1979]’, and ‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography’, in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29-52 and 203-35.

⁴³ Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’, pp. 149-181.

⁴⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations’, *New Literary History*, 31.4 (Autumn 2000), 727-44.

queer feminist durationality.⁴⁶ These scholars seek to muddle temporalities – between, for example, events or artworks of the 1960s and 1970s, and discursive contexts of the present day – in pursuit of generative ways in which temporal overlaps disrupt more dominant notions of succession, displacement, and chronological ‘progress’. For example, Muñoz writes about employing hope and associated utopian modes as a critical methodology in itself, which intervenes into present scholarly and cultural dispositions in which ‘the romance of community’ of previous feminisms has been replaced with the ‘the romance of singularity and negativity’.⁴⁷ He proposes instead a negotiation between the absolute positions of ‘community’, on the one hand, and its negation on the other, by foregrounding instead the importance of collectivity and criticality ‘from a renewed and newly animated sense of the social’.⁴⁸ Muñoz theorises his methodology as a form of ‘cruising’ in that critical relationships to the social, and to hope, revolution, or utopias, are contingent, strategic, and never fixed or permanent. The manner in which I draw from Muñoz, Freeman, and Jones will become clearer (I explain them in further detail in Chapters One, Two, and Five), but they are invoked with the overarching belief that issues relating to identity, and particularly – for this thesis – identity in art uncovered in the 1970s are far from resolved. Furthermore, I argue that bringing histories of the 1970s and the discursive contexts of the present day together enriches understandings of each as complex, and disperses problematic conceptions of the absolute.

So far I have foregrounded theories of US-based feminist scholars, but in post-millennial theatre and performance studies in the UK, Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris’ collaborative research into relationships between feminisms and contemporary theatre remains central to the field. Particularly, their edited collection *Feminist Futures? Theatre*,

⁴⁶ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012) [especially pp. 6, 174].

⁴⁷ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

Performance, Theory – which includes essays by feminist scholars, but also key UK artists such as SuAndi, and Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (of performance group Curious) – usefully sets out a scholarly and cultural landscape of performance intersecting with issues of feminism. In the book, Aston and Harris foreground the question mark of their collection’s title, and uncertainty or criticality as to ‘whether or not feminism may still obtain as a mobilizing force shaping political, social and artistic futures’, inviting ‘an interrogation of the present, which in turn demands some reflection on the legacies of the “established” feminist and feminist-theatre traditions of the past’.⁴⁹ Writing in 2006, the work is positioned in the midst of emerging critical discourses on and within post-feminism, which they define by its ‘oppositional’ relationships to previous feminisms, at a time when ‘Western feminism [had] no high-profile political movement’.⁵⁰ Particularly, Aston and Harris point out gathering criticisms of what they call ‘the violence of “we”’ in feminist histories which are haunted by latent assumptions of heterosexual and white neutrality or universality, whereby the collectivising ‘we’, as they argue, ‘might even be invoked as a *source* of oppression for the multiple and plural subjects, previously known collectively as “women”’.⁵¹ While recognising the profound importance of such incisive critiques, Aston and Harris call attention to what might be lost in the ‘anti-essentialist theoretical hygiene’ (a phrase they borrow from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) of these and related discourses which create further distance from previous feminisms. Their appeal for strategic coalitions (which recognise the ongoing demands of identificatory differences) continues to resonate, even as the political and cultural mood has shifted yet again, towards a mainstream landscape in which feminisms are more widely present, though still far from redundant. Indeed, they explore this context further in their more recent book *A Good Night Out for the Girls*:

⁴⁹ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, ‘Feminist Futures and the Possibilities of “We”?’ in *Feminist Futures? Theatre, Performance, Theory*, ed. by Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 2.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

Popular Feminisms in Contemporary Theatre and Performance (2013), in which their scholarly focus is driven more forcefully by their critical awareness of the privileges of writing feminisms from within the academy. For example, at an intersection between ‘popular feminisms’ and experimental theatre, Harris explains how – in contrast to the previously cited post-feminist trajectories – Nic Green’s *Trilogy* (2009), which includes scenes of women dancing and performing naked together, celebrates historical feminisms in a way that arguably sweeps over their shortcomings, but also might productively shift focus away from oppositional or antagonistic discursive (and, I would further emphasise, aesthetic) frameworks, and towards an ‘affective political bond’.⁵² Though focussed on very different performance and visual cultures to those theorised by Muñoz in his queer feminist of colour scholarship – and indeed the practices to which I attend – the feminist methodologies of Aston and Harris also occupy the shared critical space which I draw from, and locate this thesis within.

I cannot offer an exhaustive survey of the large, growing field of scholarship on performance practices which intersect with feminism here; but I do note that this area is particularly populated by theatre and performance studies, whereas histories of feminist art have perhaps expectedly been less focussed on performance. Investigations into sexual constructions and interpretations of artists’ bodies throughout this thesis is particularly influenced by Rebecca Schneider’s research into what she terms the ‘explicit body’, which remains a major reference point for performance studies, even almost 20 years after the publication of *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997).⁵³ In *The Explicit Body*, ‘keeping in mind the double meaning of the word “appropriate”’, Schneider looks at ways in which American artists (including Latina artists and other women of colour) such as Carolee

⁵² Geraldine Harris, ‘Once More with Feeling: Joanna Murray-Smith’s *The Female of the Species* and Nic Green’s *Trilogy*’, in Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *A Good Night Out for the Girls: Popular Feminisms in Contemporary Theatre and Performance* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 93-113 (pp. 112-3).

⁵³ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Schneemann, Karen Finley, and Robbie McCauley push at ‘appropriateness’ while also potentially ‘appropriating’ ‘modernist “shock value” and the particular fascination with a “primitive,” sexual and excremental body’.⁵⁴ Her feminist interpretation also clusters around questions or assumptions of ‘who has the right to author’ such a body, ‘or more to the point, who determines the explication of that body, what and how it means’ in historical contexts where agency is repeatedly directed away from the artists themselves, and placed under political or juridical scrutiny.⁵⁵ I draw from Schneider’s theorisation and methodology, in which she charts representations of ‘prostitute’ bodies of the art historical canon against her feminist and materialist analyses of (women) artists’ recent investigations into moving between roles of the artist and the artists’ object.

However, I respond to, and depart from, Schneider’s research in attempting to draw attention towards events and artists based in the UK. One of the reasons for this is that many of the artists discussed in this thesis are typically under-acknowledged in major accounts of performance art and related forms, though some artists’ works have been significantly more historicised than others. For instance, of UK based artists working in the 1970s, RoseLee Goldberg’s canonical text *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* represents Gilbert and George, Silvia Ziranek, Stuart Brisley, Rose English, Marc Chaimowicz, COUM Transmissions, Anne Bean, Bruce McLean, Alastair MacLennan, Reindeer Werk (Thom Puckey and Dirk Larsen), and Bobby Baker.⁵⁶ Goldberg’s more recent book *Performance: Live Art since the 60s* covers more, including Carlyle Reedy and Mary Kelly (who was based in the UK in the 1970s), but all are (by nature of the survey) made reference to in brief, and

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (1979 rpt., London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), pp. 165, 167-9, 177-8, 181, 182, 207, 210, 220, 221, 225.

others discussed in this thesis such as Rose Finn-Kelcey and David Medalla are included in neither.⁵⁷

There are a number of recent survey-type publications and research projects which specifically represent activities in overlapping fields of feminism and performance in the UK in the 1970s. For instance, a number of the key artists discussed in this thesis are represented in *re.act.feminism #2*, which included of a touring archival display (2011-13), and now exists as an online archive and print publication.⁵⁸ Focussing on feminist and queer performance art (particularly from Europe and the US) between 1960 and 1980, the project exhibits documentation and accompanying captions of performance works by over 180 artists, including Rose Finn-Kelcey, Tina Keane, and Anne Bean. While the project works effectively towards raising awareness of, and drawing connections between, feminist artists who remain underrepresented in mainstream institutions, it also reveals the urgency of further critical or theoretical engagement with their works. With a more loosely defined formal scope, but more intently focussed on UK artists, Kathy Battista offers a detailed survey of feminist art in 1970s London, particularly conceptual, performance, and body-based art, in her recent book *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (2013). Battista writes that she aims to ‘begin the recovery process’ of a relatively overlooked and inaccurately historicised set of practices.⁵⁹ Through archival research and interviews with key artists and critics such as Rose Finn-Kelcey, Catherine Elwes, and Guy Brett amongst others, Battista brings to light new information not only on important exhibitions, but also the ‘alternative spaces’ occupied and created by women artists in London during this time. Considerations of non-gallery locations

⁵⁷ RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s* (1998 rpt., London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 24, 130, 132.

⁵⁸ Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer (eds.), *re.act.feminism: A Performing Archive* (Nürnberg and London: Verlag für Modern Kunst and Live Art Development Agency, 2014).

⁵⁹ Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 1.

such as The London Filmmakers Co-operative and Women's Free Arts Alliance, as well as journals such as *Spare Rib*, as sites of discourse are particularly enlightening in Battista's research, and the book functions well in offering a general overview of the discursive and artistic contexts for feminist art at the time. Overall, Battista makes a compelling argument that sites of feminist activity in the 1970s actively shifted away from institutions, and towards 'more discursive', heterogeneous spaces for art and activism generally in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁰

However – again – Battista's discussion occasionally fails to grapple with the concepts and ideas surrounding the works in any great depth, and thematic analysis mainly comes into play only in the final chapter (where she details possible legacies of 1970s art visible in works by artists who emerged in the 1990s such as Tracey Emin and Hayley Newman). There is also a disappointing lack of critical rigour or interrogation of the material at times. Occasionally, her argument leans on problematic statements made by other critics; for instance, in her discussion of Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*, Battista unquestioningly presents curator Barry Barker's inaccurate account of the piece (he said that it was "the first time that questions were asked in the House of Commons about art").⁶¹ Battista herself also tends to make bold claims for her subjects without always presenting the range of evidence required to back up her assertions; for instance, her characterisation of women's art prior to the 1970s as merely 'a history of women replicating men's work' is particularly questionable.⁶² It is, however, easy to sympathise with the author's enthusiasm, and I have drawn on *Renegotiating the Body* throughout as it provides a good platform for further research into uncovering historically shrouded and marginalised practices. Nevertheless, as the author herself acknowledges, it 'only cracks the surface'.⁶³ In

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶² Ibid., p. 160.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 88.

contrast to Battista's – and others' – approach, I have opted for a more concentrated and thematically in-depth engagement with fewer artists working in performance.

Resolutely focussed on Geraldine Harris' recent call for feminist scholars to challenge 'what counts as theory',⁶⁴ I do not extend the focus of my writing to looking in-depth at critical or theoretical precursors of psychoanalysis or social constructionism. Where some feminist scholars (particularly more established scholars) have recently lamented the lack (or brevity) of engagement with psychoanalysis in contemporary criticism,⁶⁵ I argue that there are comparatively unexplored areas which require more urgent attention. Like many emerging feminist scholars, I locate new, intersectional feminisms emerging in the aftermath of black and queer feminist theory and movements, which place emphasis on the changeable and self-fashioned body as exciting, central places for feminist discussion today. I am less interested in re-examining patrilineages of psychoanalysis which work towards, as Griselda Pollock has recently argued, understandings of 'why we do the things we do' because I am resistant to the predominance of male theory, but also because my feminist imperative is to reject notions of behavioural 'origins', where causality is frequently located in childhood (even if relating to wider patterns of influence), as well as binary understandings of femininity as 'lack'.⁶⁶

Engagement with psychoanalytic theory appears to me to be a key point of difference between generations of feminists. For me, this was made evident at a recent talk with Lynne Segal and Griselda Pollock, and chaired by Sonia Boyce, at which Pollock – importantly for me – argued for a 'transgenerational' conception of feminism. However, the speakers failed to adequately address ways in which investigations posed by psychoanalysis are re-articulated over time in

⁶⁴ Geraldine Harris remarked on this issue of theory in 'A Cocktail Seminar on Feminism, Live Art, Archives and the Academy' at Queen Mary, University of London, 9 June 2014.

⁶⁵ Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 4.

⁶⁶ Griselda Pollock and Lynne Segal in discussion, chaired by Sonia Boyce, 'Radical Thinkers: the art, sex and politics of feminism', Tate Modern, 9 February 2015.

different languages and critical frameworks, and seemed to undermine the significance of a wider shift amongst younger generations of feminists towards intersectional feminisms.⁶⁷

Conversely, I would query underlying assumptions that psychoanalysis is the only means of understanding behaviour, or that intersectionality is only yet another passing ‘fashion’; furthermore, I argue that psychoanalysis, as theoretically dense (or, I would hazard, frequently mystifying), canonically constructed, and academic, poses problems of accessibility. I am, however, interested in the crucial and important ways in which feminists have utilised and adapted theories arising from Freudian and Lacanian scholarship, particularly in their focus on questions of desire, subjectivity, and affect, as in Julia Kristeva’s investigations into the abject, or Lacanian enquiries into performativity and ‘authenticity’ by Judith Butler or Peggy Phelan, which radically depart from their psychoanalytic forebears. I offer this as explanation as to why my research follows feminist materialist scholarship (such as Schneider’s) more closely than Phelan’s similarly influential and totemic performance studies text of the 1990s, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993).⁶⁸ Similarly, having touched on a methodological differentiation between Pollock’s research and my own, I also draw from her and other feminist art historians’ important interventions into questions of historical recovery and canonicity – as I explain in further detail in Chapters One and Two. Pollock and Roszika Parker’s *Framing Feminism* also offers an invaluable range of sources for understanding developments in feminist practice through the period.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid. During the ‘questions and answers’ section of the evening, I asked the speakers (whose presentations were heavily psychoanalytical) a related question about how psychoanalysis might fit in with this ‘transgenerational’ feminism, to which Pollock responded that younger generations should read her publications for answers to this, and that she regretted that feminists ‘now’ might too readily ‘abandon’ questions of ‘why we do the things we do’. Concurring with Pollock, Segal noted the ‘fashions’ of feminism such as intersectionality as a factor for shifting uses of, or movements away from, psychoanalysis.

⁶⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁶⁹ Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970-1985* (London: Pandora, 1987).

Methodologies and Historiographies

The first step in undertaking this research was to survey the archival material that was, or was not available. To trouble the present archival representation, and to shed new light where there was none, I also undertook a series of interviews; firstly, to find out more about the artistic and discursive contexts of feminism and performance in the 1970s; and secondly, to discover more about specific events. Prioritising artists whose voices were not always well represented by scholarly research, this began with artists and organisers of the 1980 ‘women’s season’, including Catherine Elwes, Sonia Knox, Silvia Ziranek, Roberta Graham, and curator Sandy Nairne. Later, interviews with Carlyle Reedy (in person) and Cosey Fanni Tutti (via email) were crucial in giving me further insight into their practice. Anne Bean (in person) also gave me further insight into intersections of feminist issues and performance in the 1970s, as well as Rose Finn-Kelcey’s performance practice. I also engaged in email correspondence with others such as Alexis Hunter (who has since passed away), Hannah O’Shea, and John Dugger. In instances where I did not interview the artist in question, these were mostly due to practical issues of unavailability (or, in the case of some, reluctance to reflect again on historically distant events), or more happily because – as in the case of Bobby Baker, for example – their voices have been more widely represented in scholarly and critical contexts. I also note here that this thesis does not include illustrative material of each work discussed; rather, I have included images only where I refer to them directly (for some of the performances discussed there are no existing and/or available documentary images).

As I have suggested, my methodology must also work to decentre the institutional archive as a source of ‘evidence’. Here, I draw from Spivak’s materialist and deconstructionist historiography (as methodology), which challenges the privileging of theory in ‘explanations’ of culture, and the binary logics upon which notions of ‘centrality’ (as opposed to marginality)

function.⁷⁰ In resistance to what she described as the ‘rage for order’ in the humanities, which is bound up with vindications of ‘valid’ and ‘correct’ readings, Spivak proposes instead a confrontational interpretive mode which makes use of the archival marginalia that positivist historians may regard as the ‘incidental ornamentation’ to the ‘facts’ of the evidence.⁷¹ In 1979 Spivak wrote:

The line I am suggesting I have called, in a feminist context, ‘scrupulous and plausible misreadings.’ Since all readings, including the original text, are constituted by, or effects of, the necessary possibility of misreadings, in my argument the question becomes one of interpretations for use, built on the old grounds of coherence, without the cant of theoretical adequacy. And the emphasis falls on alert pedagogy.⁷²

I therefore pursue the feminist possibilities of ‘scrupulous and plausible misreadings’ by being resolutely unfaithful to the institutional archive. Having completed the initial survey of material, I then looked to confront the archival representation (or absence of representation) of events by making use of other institutional and personal archives, and attending to the ‘incidental ornamentation’ of unbalanced tabloid journalism, slippery oral histories, and excessive auto-mythologies. This is a preferable strategy because it emphasises the art works and events as social texts (to be read and made feminist use of), and foregrounds the agency of the artist themselves, but also – as Spivak has proposed in relation to subaltern studies – the continual possibility of misreading, in resistance to the containing and totalising effects of certainty.⁷³

Asserting my own agency and authorial voice as a scholar has also become particularly urgent for me as a feminist (and personal) imperative during the course of researching and writing this thesis. The counter side to this is that I must also acknowledge my position of

⁷⁰ Spivak, ‘Explanation and Culture’, pp. 41, 44.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 45-6.

⁷² Ibid., p. 45.

⁷³ Spivak, ‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography [1985]’, p. 210.

privilege: as a scholar I am part of the institutional context of academia; I am engaged in the ‘master’s house’ of the archive and other institutions of culture; and I gain from writing about the work of artists who may not agree with, or wish for, my critical attention. It is also worth noting that many of my privileges are held as a result of feminist and class struggles of previous generations. In the course of interviewing for this thesis, and in other related conversations around how performance, feminism, and academia intersect, I have noted a tendency of artists, arts professionals, and other commentators to regard academics or scholarly institutions with suspicion. For instance, on first meeting Harry Walton, with whom Rose Finn-Kelcey collaborated during the 1970s and 1980s, he commented on witnessing early performance art activities in the UK being rapidly ‘jumped on’ by academics, who were ‘predatory’ in their consumption of the still-fragile emerging form.⁷⁴ In this light, my ‘consumption’ of archival material could be seen as a form of destructive ‘use’, or as an attempt to make questionable claims to the ‘real thing’ (artists and their past works). Indeed, I heed warnings made by a number of feminists, particularly, contemporary feminists of colour, and others, that to speak on behalf of others is a potentially dangerous act of violence that must be carefully avoided.⁷⁵ This is particularly true where archival or interview-based research is at risk of creating the illusion that it allows a recovery of the artist’s ‘intention’. On the other hand, the assumption that the scholar is to act as an ‘official’ kind of ‘mouthpiece’ for the artist is also equally problematic. Such questions are important for anybody engaged in research into cultural or social practice, but I also question the notion that only the artist can ‘know’, that the only authoritative reading is their own, or that their work and surrounding discourse belongs only to them. While researchers must be self-reflexively engaged in ways in which they are part of structures of institutional legitimation (which are not necessarily desirable when left

⁷⁴ In the summer of 2014 I assisted The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey in creating an inventory of the artist’s personal archive, during which this conversation took place.

⁷⁵ See Linda Martín Alcoff, ‘The Problem of Speaking for Others’
<<http://www.alcoff.com/content/speaothers.html>> [accessed 21 December 2015].

unquestioned), it has also become clear that patterns of power are more dynamic, contingent, and shifting, and are not simply comprised of the academic, institutional and exploitative 'insider', and the non-academic, non-institutional exploited 'outsider'.

In relation to this, I reached a pivotal moment of realisation while undertaking research into Rose Finn-Kelcey's life and practice. In the summer of 2014, following the artists' death, the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey asked for and encouraged me to undertake a number of days of unpaid labour for them in helping to organise archival materials, which allowed me access towards my research. Then, when I approached the Estate for permission to use and cite from archival materials for an article its executor asked to read a draft, and then responded with shock, suggesting that I remove the word 'feminist' throughout my research in relation to Finn-Kelcey's practice, and implying that in claiming Finn-Kelcey as a subject for feminist interpretation I had misled them as to my intentions in accessing her archive. While in the process of going through the archive I was initially encouraged to look at Finn-Kelcey's notebooks, which detailed her involvement with collective feminist organising and interest in feminist theory in the 1970s, when it came to publishing material in reference to them, it was suggested by the Estate that my writing about her processes somehow became exploitative. Amelia Jones has commented on the regrettable effects of correlations between archival and capitalist imperatives in attempts to control what is written about artists' works,⁷⁶ and I assume that part of the reason for the Estate's response was that my positioning Finn-Kelcey in terms of her importance for feminist histories of performance was seen as potentially jeopardising some other market position or investment.

Why the 1970s, Why Now?

⁷⁶ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 12.

Over the last five years or more there has been a surge of interest in reappraising and re-enacting feminist art and performance which emerged from the 1970s. This is taking place not only amongst groups with a ‘specialist’ interest and particular dedication, but also in mainstream and commercial venues.⁷⁷ One of the ways in which this is manifest is in the surge of commercial galleries showing work by women artists who have been, and continue to be, pioneers of feminist art and performance from the late 1960s and 1970s. For instance, as in the example of *LIBERTIES: An exhibition of contemporary art reflecting on 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act* (Collyer Bristow Gallery, 2015), the exhibition described at the beginning of this introduction. Curatorial strategies within commercial spaces are also occurring in parallel with increasing visibility in mainstream public galleries; for instance, in 2012 US artist Suzanne Lacy’s high-profile *Silver Action* took place at Tate Modern, and included 250 older women participants gathering to share memories of feminist activism, their experiences and stories of their lives to be documented and observed by other participants. *Silver Action* built on, and re-enacted elements of, earlier works across the span of Lacy’s career, including her co-founding Ariadne: A Social Art Network with Leslie Labowitz in the mid-1970s, and a performance and video installation project *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-7) which centred on feminist oral histories. Hoping to strengthen existing friendships as well as create new alliances between women, Lacy has emphasised of *The Crystal Quilt* the importance of women writing themselves into history, but with the important caveat that the participants and viewers ‘didn’t see these older women as potential reservoirs of memory, but as potential activists within the

⁷⁷ For example, a selection of recent exhibitions in London showing documentation and art works by Rose Finn-Kelcey, Rose English, Carlyle Reedy, Sonia Boyce and others might include: *Taking Matters Into Our Own Hands* (Richard Saltoun Gallery, 2013); *BP Walk Through British Art* (Tate Britain, 2013-); *Carlyle Reedy: Icons of a Process* (Flat Time House, 2014); *LIBERTIES: An exhibition of contemporary art reflecting on 40 years since the Sex Discrimination Act* (Collyer Bristow Gallery, 2015); and *Rose English: A Premonition of the Act* (Camden Arts Centre, 2015). This is not to mention the ever-expanding number of talks and seminars in mainstream institutions dedicated to discuss historical and ongoing feminist histories of art both in the UK and more broadly.

public sphere.⁷⁸ Catherine Elwes, a London-based feminist artist, curator and academic who worked with performance and video from the late 1970s describes her experience of taking part in *Silver Action* as one which was ‘very moving’ and created a ‘powerful evocation of the time, passion, and hard work’ of women’s feminist activities in the mid-to-late twentieth century, but which also felt ‘disconcerting’ in being on display as a mass of unnamed older women, alienated both from the spectators as well as the anonymous group of staff and volunteers listening in and documenting the conversations – who were instructed not to ask questions or respond. This, for Elwes, signified the limits and limitations of the participatory basis of the work.

While acknowledging *Silver Action*’s crucial project of nurturing dialogue between older women, Elwes’ account of the event also draws attention to a disjuncture between generations that is emblematised in the directed silence of the younger volunteers and participants. For me, this, alongside *Liberties*, offers examples of ways in which institutional visibility is, in itself, not enough to propel trajectories of feminist art and history-making. We also need to strengthen and develop tools for transgenerational dialogue between feminists, and continue to interrogate the quality and diversity of participation in the arts. So, what is at stake in women and people of minority backgrounds entering into art institutions, how can women across generations participate in the pasts and presents of those feminist histories, and what can they offer in terms of fashioning feminist futures?

Summary of Chapters

⁷⁸ Suzanne Lacy interview for Tate, ‘The Tanks: Suzanne Lacy’, Suzanne Lacy: The Crystal Quilt, Tate, <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern-tanks/display/suzanne-lacy-crystal-quilt>> [accessed 20 August 2015].

As I have mentioned, Chapter One starts with ‘the end’ of the chronological timeline of events which I focus on, with the mainstream intervention of the ‘women’s season’ in 1980. I explain the background to the season and focus on the women artists working in ‘third area’, time-based arts in the *About Time* portion of the season. As I outline more information about the artists involved and detail specific works, I begin to establish a greater sense of the context and surrounding discourses of feminist art in the UK in the 1970s, including a perceived rift between women who utilised their own bodies in performance, and those who chose to represent their bodies in other ways, or not at all. Often charged with accusations of essentialism, or colluding with male-led systems of looking, I demonstrate ways in which women working in performance critiqued notions of essential identity, proposed or allow new models of identification, and drew from techniques of distancing which were presumed by some to be absent in modes of performance. Much of this chapter outlines key theories and is focussed on historical ‘recovery’ of the story of the women’s season, which is now coming into re-appraisal. In Chapter Two I then focus more intently on one of the *About Time* artists, Rose Finn-Kelcey, and examine in greater detail ways in which her performances must be remembered, and ways in which their feminist potential increases when brought into conversation with contemporary models of ‘anti-binary’ thought and practice. In Chapter Three I then return to the ‘beginning’, and look at the emerging feminist practices of the late-1960s, particularly in relation to ‘US visitors’ Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman, as being among the first performance artists to perform at the new ICA at Nash House. I examine ways in which their works radically challenge established tenets of (male-led) modernism, and I begin to explore a notion of feminist ‘infidelity’ expressed in their works, as their bodies are considered as defiled or defiling subjects in the context of the museum-of-art-as-temple. In the next chapter, drawing on Haraway’s notion of an ‘infidel heteroglossia’,⁷⁹ I then develop this

⁷⁹ Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’, p. 180.

proposal in relation to Cosey Fanni Tutti's technologically constructed and explicit body in her *Magazine Actions* of the mid-1970s. In this chapter I also outline in further detail the punk and 'negative' or pessimistic aesthetic and concept of Tutti's works, which are so characteristic of many new developments in art in the 1970s. In Chapter Five I return to the 'big questions' of identity and identification, exploring more directly notions of diversity in relation to early forms of performance art in Carlyle Reedy's practice, and participation art in David Medalla and John Dugger's *People Weave a House!* (1972). Finally, the conclusion outlines a brief history of 'what happens next', at the ICA, particularly in the 1990s, and beyond. Here, I comment on the ICA's claims to radicalism in relation to the present state of institutional support for (or lack of) live art. With the closure of the ICA's Live & Media Arts unit in mind, I argue that further feminist performance interventions into mainstream, public spaces are required now more than ever, and can benefit greatly from discursive and interpretive frameworks of what Amelia Jones theorises as 'queer feminist durationality',⁸⁰ or what Muñoz persuasively articulates as 'a backward glance that enacts a future vision'.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 6.

⁸¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 4.

Chapter One

About Time: The 'Women's Season'

Questions of visibility have been established as pivotal for feminist art history from the outset of the field's emergence in the 1970s and 1980s. Leading scholars such as Linda Nochlin in the US and, later, Griselda Pollock in the UK contributed vital insights into the dangers of a type of revisionism whereby women are simply inserted into patrilineages of 'great' male artists (to echo Nochlin),¹ without understanding and challenging the long-established schemata of their production. As Pollock summarised in the late 1980s, the conditions of greatness around which canonicity were organised, to the detriment of women and other marginalised artists, included masculinist notions of (male) genius and singularity, fixation on – and consumption of – the art object according to naturalised assumptions of beauty and value, and interpretive distance or assumed autonomy from the social conditions of art practice.² Pollock proposed instead to approach art as a '*social practice*, as a totality of many relations and determinations'.³ She argued that theoretical approaches of feminist historical materialism, which account for intersecting factors of gender, race, and class (and their interdependence), could be effective in displacing inadequate assumptions about the supposed neutrality of vision, and could also enable a feminist art historical practice which is self-reflexive in approaching the recovery and potential containment of artists in history.⁴ In the context of the ICA (and the UK more broadly), questions surrounding the manner in which feminists in the 1970s sought visibility in

¹ Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', *ARTnews*, 69 (1971), 22-39. I go on to explain this later in this chapter.

² Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 1-4. Emphasis in original.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

mainstream institutions of art (which includes art history) are brought into focus by the collective organisation and mainstream reception of the 1980s 'women's season', which I offer an account of in this chapter. I then explore some of the artistic and discursive contexts of feminist art in the UK in which performance emerged through the 1970s by drawing focus to *About Time: Video Performance and Installation by 21 Women Artists*, one of the exhibitions of the 'women's season'. Maintaining the feminist principle of collectivity (out of which the 'women's season' grew), I draw on archival research and also interviews with artists and others, and I consider a number of key works – particularly those by Rose Garrard, Hannah O'Shea, and Bobby Baker.

Over the course of this chapter, I aim to equip the reader with a contextual framework with which to further consider the artistic and political imperatives of how, why, and to what effects women artists turned to performance in the 1970s, which I discuss throughout this thesis. I explore performance as a contested terrain in feminist art and art history, considering arguments posed by feminists – particularly artist Mary Kelly (and also Pollock) – who were concerned with the potential essentialisms of bodily or perceived biological representation, and questioned the efficacy of women directly presenting and representing their own bodies as a feminist strategy. Throughout, I invoke Amelia Jones' art historical approach by drawing attention to the generative possibilities of bringing past and present iterations of feminist representation and theory into conversation, 'linking the interpreting body of the present with the bodies referenced or performed in the past as a work of art' – within and alongside the interpretive mode that she theorises as queer feminist durationality.⁵ Specifically, Jones seeks to problematise what she perceives of as fixities of established anti-essentialist feminist visual theory – particularly the writings of Kelly and Pollock – and their suggestions that performance

⁵ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 6, 174.

practices of the 1970s tended towards claims or assumptions of authenticity and notions of an essential self.⁶ Here, following Jones, I favour an interrogation of the materiality of the production of the performances and their archival representation, over what Jones calls ‘non-anamorphic’ frameworks of authenticity (which I challenge throughout).⁷ Considered in this way, I am able to acknowledge the contexts of their production and understand their strategic force in relation to feminist discourses of the 1970s, while also resituating them in a more open space for transgenerational engagement.

The ‘women’s season’ of 1980 arose out of women’s collective organising in the late 1970s. Efforts towards gaining a major exhibition of art by women at the ICA coalesced after 1978, when artist-activist Nina Jennings called on fellow feminists to engage in a protest outside the ICA against pop artist Allen Jones’ show *Women As Furniture and Sex Objects* (28 July – 19 August 1978).⁸ Jones’ work most famously comprised painting and sculpture involving erotic figures of distorted, long-limbed, smoothed and flattened women who are frequently clad in bondage-style clothing or stiletto heels, and with prominent, round breasts. For instance, *Chair* (1969) was one of a series of works in which the figure of the woman is modelled from fibreglass and positioned to create furniture. *Chair* consists of a model of a topless blonde woman wearing black knee-high stiletto lace-up boots, black underwear, and black elbow gloves, positioned so that as she lies on her back (Fig. 1). Her knees are drawn up to her chest and her legs are bound together by a thick, black belt strap running around her back, tying her into a partial ball position. The points of her heels extend upwards over her head forming a back rest, and the backs of her thighs act as the base for a Perspex and leather cushioned seat. Her expression is robotic with lowered eyelids as she submissively gazes at her knees, just

⁶ Ibid., p. 178.

⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

⁸ Jacqueline Morreau and Joyce Agee, ‘Introduction: A New Look at Old Masters’, in *Women’s Images of Men*, ed. by Sandy Nairne et al, exh. cat. (London: ICA, 1980), pp. 3-5 (p. 3).

below her nose; her arms lie mechanically on the floor, alongside her torso. *Chair* and Jones' broader body of works had been the subject of feminist critique for several years by the time of the 1978 protests (though he failed and continues to fail to address these feminist concerns in a substantial way),⁹ notably with visual theorist Laura Mulvey's essay 'Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious, or, "You Don't Know What is Happening, Do You, Mr Jones?"', first published in feminist journal *Spare Rib* in 1973. In the article, Mulvey argues that Jones, in his representations of women, unwittingly makes visible the '[f]etishistic obsession' underlying popular or mass media images of women made by men, whereby real women – or attempts to represent them – are supplanted by subservient fantasy (and phallic) objects which are always available and willing to be used or punished.¹⁰ As Amelia Jones has recently written, the influence of Mulvey's article – and the later 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema', which elaborated on her concept of a pervasive male gaze – 'cannot be overestimated' in having 'set the terms for a strategic critique of sexist images of women', as Mulvey called for feminists to tackle directly the prevalent orders of representation in which the woman is the 'bearer, not maker of meaning in Western fetishism'.¹¹

Fuelled by anger at the persistent lack of women artists in the gallery space, and seeking opportunities to intervene into prevalent representations of women as powerless sex objects that were typified by Jones' works, Jennings and others demonstrating at the ICA demanded a response from ICA director Bill McAlister. As artist-curator Catherine Elwes recalls, '[his]

⁹ In a more recent article, Jones somewhat unconvincingly argues that he 'was reflecting on and commenting on exactly the same situation that was the source of the feminist movement' with the pieces' inspiration being 1960s fashion. In describing himself as a feminist, Jones effectively dismisses feminist challenges to his work as a kind of misunderstanding. See Martin Gayford, 'Allen Jones: The Day I Turned Down Stanley Kubrick', *Telegraph*, 8 October 2007 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3668398/Allen-Jones-The-day-I-turned-down-Stanley-Kubrick.html>> [accessed 2 April 2013].

¹⁰ Laura Mulvey, 'You Don't Know What Is Happening, Do You, Mr Jones? [1973]', reproduced in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985*, ed. by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 127-131 (p. 128).

¹¹ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, pp. 68-9.

exact words are not recorded, but his reply expressed the view that there existed in 1978 no work by women of any value. He then challenged Nina [Jennings] to bring him an exhibition of a quality and ambition to match that of Allen Jones. Then, he declared, he would show it.¹² Spurred on by McAlister's naïve provocation, the group gathered at the Women's Arts Alliance – a collectively-run arts space (located at that time at 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews near Regent's Park in London) dedicated to exhibiting, and producing work by women, and which had 'women only' designated spaces.¹³ Following initial meetings, Joyce Agee, Jacqueline Morreau, Pat Whiteread, Anne Wallace, Elwes and Jennings formed a committee to curate a women artists' exhibition from an open call for submissions.¹⁴ As an undated letter from Elwes to Whiteread shows, in reference to an exhibition originally entitled *A Man's World Through Women's Eyes*, the committee sought contributions by 'artists whose work constitutes a strong artistic achievement and stems from an awareness of a woman's experience in a patriarchal society'.¹⁵ After meetings in Pat Whiteread's cellar studio, and visiting women artists in their homes or (for those who had them) studios,¹⁶ the committee approached the ICA with an original selection of 40 artists.¹⁷ The proposal was not accepted – although the ICA *Women's*

¹² Catherine Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe: The "Women's" Exhibitions at the ICA, 1980, and the UK/Canadian Film and Video Exchange, 1998-2004', in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. by Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedgwick (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), pp. 101-12 (p. 105).

¹³ The Women's Arts Alliance (initially known as the Women's Free Arts Alliance) was established in 1972 and run by groups of women volunteers. It offered a non-commercial space for meetings, social events, exhibitions, and also workshops for women - including drumming and life drawing classes. In 1976 it was given £500 by the Greater London Arts Association. Notable exhibitions include *Sweet Sixteen and Never Been Shown* (1975) and *Alexis Hunter: Towards A Feminist Perception* (1977). See: Jackie Gaff, 'The Women's Free Art Alliance', *Artscribe*, 6 (April 1977), 46; and Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 129.

¹⁴ Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard and Sandy Nairne, 'About Time' in Sandy Nairne et al (eds.), *About Time*, p.i.

¹⁵ 'Images of Men – an exhibition of work by women artists', typed document, TGA 955/7/5/44, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁶ Pat Whiteread explains this selection process in an interview with Gillian Whiteley, *NLSC: Artists' Lives - Patricia Whiteread* (2002), F10802-F10809, F11490-F11492, National Life Stories Collection, British Library, London.

¹⁷ Morreau and Agee, 'Introduction', p. 4.

Images of Men catalogue tactfully frames it in terms of a decision being held in abeyance,¹⁸ and it was subsequently rejected by the Serpentine Gallery and other mainstream arts spaces.¹⁹ It wasn't until Sandy Nairne was appointed to replace Sarah Kent as Director of Exhibitions in 1979 that the proposal was reconsidered – possibly with the influence of feminist art historian Lisa Tickner (who would later marry Nairne). Coincidentally, Margaret Harrison had also approached the ICA with the exhibition *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists* (14 November – 21 December), which was curated by New York-based critic, theorist and curator of international renown Lucy R. Lippard. Subsequently, working with Nairne, the women artists' committee (at this stage working without Wallace and Jennings) decided that an additional exhibition would take place due to the huge response from the open call. The fruits of these discussions led to the creation of the 'women's season' of winter 1980. The exhibitions were: *Women's Images of Men* (4 – 26 October),²⁰ of UK-based women depicting the male figure in painting and sculpture, selected by the women artists' committee, with Nairne and Tickner; Lippard's *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists* focussed on socially engaged art by US-based and European artists including Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Jenny Holzer, and Adrian Piper; and *About Time: Video Performance and Installation by 21 Women Artists* (30 October – 9 November). *About Time* featured, as the ICA Bulletin says, 'third area' artists working in the UK in time-based forms of performance, installation and film, including Bobby Baker, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Tina Keane, and Carlyle Reedy, and was selected by Elwes, Nairne,

¹⁸ Morreau and Agee, 'Introduction', p. 4. Sandy Nairne also verified that the show had originally been turned down by Sarah Kent; Sandy Nairne, interview with the author, London 15 August 2013.

¹⁹ Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 105.

²⁰ Ben Cranfield incorrectly attributes the curation of this exhibition to Sarah Kent, despite the fact that Kent had been at the ICA when the exhibition was originally turned down; Ben Cranfield, 'Introduction', in *How Soon is Now*, ed. by Ekow Eshun (London: ICA, 2008), pp. 10-29 (p. 18). This may be because five years after the exhibition, Kent co-edited a book on *Women's Images of Men*: Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Morreau (eds.), *Women's Images of Men* (London: Pandora Press, 1985).

and artist Rose Garrard.²¹ Evidently, in contrast to the ICA's original indifference to the women artists' committee, enthusiasm for the project grew, and the season expanded to include talks and readings with high profile speakers Kate Millett, Adrienne Rich, and Susie Orbach, and a series of film screenings titled *Women's Own*.²² Communicative and publicity networks of the 'women's season' also extended out to include *Eight Artists: Women: 1980* (3 October – 22 November, 1980) running concurrently at Acme Gallery.²³ *Eight Artists* was curated by Claire Smith and presented painting and sculpture by women which intervened into Minimalist practices – which had been predominantly associated with key male figures such as Donald Judd and Carl Andre.²⁴ Finally, a 'salon des refusés', *The Extended Images of Men Show* (22 September – 6 October) also took place at the Bakehouse Gallery in Blackheath, where Shirley Cameron performed a live work based on the 'men in her life': 'father, lovers, husband, work partner and gallery director'.²⁵ Furthermore, many of the *Women's Images of Men* submissions that were not accepted were also displayed in a slide carousel at the ICA, and also received critical attention in the press.²⁶

Women's Images of Men included – although was not dominated by – sexual imagery, the objectification of men, deployed in variously ironic and more sincere ways, and representations of the male nude. It proved to be very popular, reaching a thousand visitors a

²¹ Elwes, Garrard, and Nairne signed the acceptance and rejection letters for proposals, but others such as Rose Finn-Kelcey were also involved in decision-making processes. Elwes' central contribution to the 'women's season' is particularly notable as she was only 26 at the time of the initial committee meetings in 1978.

²² According to Catherine Elwes, it is Lippard's recognisability as an art world 'personality' that inaccurately positions her, over and above the artists' collective, at the forefront of the ICA 'women's season' in a recent account of the events; 'A Parallel Universe', p. 107.

²³ The *Eight Artists* exhibition features in William Raban's recent film about Acme artists and activities during this time, *72-82* (2014).

²⁴ Works by Shelagh Cluett, Emma Park, Jozefa Rogocki, and Claire Smith were exhibited in the first part of the exhibition, and Mikey Cuddihy, Sarah Greengrass, Margaret Organ, and Alison Wilding in part two. A copy of the catalogue is available online: Shelagh Cluett Trust <<http://www.shelaghcluett.com/acmecat.pdf>> [accessed 22 October 2015].

²⁵ Lynne MacRitchie, 'Women's Performance: About Time', *Performance Magazine*, 8 (1980), 6-9 (p. 9).

²⁶ Jacqueline Morreau and Catherine Elwes, 'Lighting A Candle', in *Women's Images of Men*, ed. by Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Morreau (London: Pandora, 1985), pp. 13-26 (p. 17); Peter Martin, 'An Exhibition of Himself', *Observer*, 12 October 1980, p. 40.

day according to one article.²⁷ Indeed, the perceived popularity of the show was also related to the figurative nature of the work on display: Nairne, Elwes, and others have since commented that the show presented a 'break' with the conceptual, abstract and Minimal forms that were perceived to be prevalent in emerging arts.²⁸ Interestingly, McAlister's alleged dismissal of women artists' work as basically 'not serious' was echoed in that figurative work was also perceived to be considered 'not serious' in the context of formal developments through the 1970s. The ICA publicity then contributed to an aura of naughtiness, transgression, and antagonistic feminist politics surrounding the exhibition where it sensationally describes how the artists 'depict men as aggressors and crippled dependents, as sex-objects and figures of fun', and that 'the tone of their work must inevitably vary from humour to horror'.²⁹ A more accurate description would be that *Women's Images of Men* dealt with imagery of desire, but also of nuanced relationships between pleasure and pain, as well as myriad other themes such as memory, dreams, everyday life, punk aesthetics, capitalism, love, vulnerability, social constructions of masculinity, and works which focussed on experimenting with shapes and forms of the body. For instance, Helen White's *Man in Bathtub* (1979) consists of a photograph of a man with whom she had been living, naked and lying back in a bath. He is, as White explained in the catalogue, not presented as 'provocative or aggressive', but 'self-contained and passive'; the domestic intimacy, tenderness, and serenity of the image is amplified by the stick-on plastic crocodiles furnishing the bathroom tiles, and the man's body is relaxed as the still water envelopes him.³⁰

²⁷ Waldemar Januszczak 'A ghetto that holds half the world's population: Male means of expression are useless', *Guardian*, 6 November 1980, p.18.

²⁸ Catherine Elwes, interview with the author, London, 25 July 2013; Sandy Nairne, interview with the author, London, 15 August 2013; Catherine Elwes and Lill Ann Chepstow Lusty speaking at *Women's Images of Men Study Day*, Nottingham Contemporary Gallery, 18 March 2014.

²⁹ October 1980, ICA Bulletin, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁰ Helen White, 'Helen White,' *Women's Images of Men*, exh. cat., p. 51.

The quietly reflective tone of *Man in Bathtub* and the themes it evokes, however, are at odds with the newspaper coverage and critical reception of the exhibition. Writing for *The Guardian*, critic Waldemar Januszczak saw only a 'sea of penises', describing the exhibition in terms of 'an aura of sensationalism, of penises for penises' sake, underlines the savagery with which some of the exhibitors have entered the arena'.³¹ In fact, only eight of the 35 selected works represented a penis, and only one of those is identifiably erect. Jenni Wittman's *Untitled* (1978-9) painting of a man in an armchair wearing only a jumper and glasses features an erect penis at the centre of the frame, and could perhaps be considered 'savage' in that the painting of the leg deliberately 'cuts off' below the knee. Hardly 'sensational', Wittman's work replies to the 'savagery' of Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, and countless other celebrated male artists' distortions, fragmentations and dissections of figures of women. Considered in light of Januszczak's comments, Roberta Juzefa's photographic work *Aura* (1979) might also be notable in that it attends to a male subject with a very large penis (emphasised by the very short trim of his pubic hair) as he lies naked on a carpeted floor. However, the 'aura' of colours around the figure produced by the slow shutter speed, soft focus, and attention to light and shadow actually creates a dream-like image, as the artist attempted to capture the man's 'male mystique' and 'sensitivity'.³² The inaccuracy and vulgarity of much of the newspaper reporting on the show was picked up on by Mary Meihner, who argued in the *Irish Times* that the critics talked as if the aim of the exhibition was to allow women to 'blame men for absolutely everything'; the critics had, she said, 'missed the point'.³³ What media interpretations such as Januszczak's did show is that by confronting the male gaze and drawing attention to the novelty of comparable female perspectives, the works highlighted the ubiquity of the male 'fetishism' identified by Mulvey. Whereas Jones' deliberately sexual, fetishistic and 'pop' works were regarded by art institutions

³¹ Waldemar Januszczak, 'Mark of Unoriginal Sin', *Guardian*, 6 October 1980, p. 9; Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 106.

³² Roberta Juzefa, 'Roberta Juzefa', *Women's Images of Men*, exh. cat, p. 33.

³³ Mary Meihner, 'Women's Images of Men', *Irish Times*, 24 October 1980, p. 12.

as venerable by 1978, *Women's Images of Men* produced a shock factor amongst critics, despite the fact that many of the works took their form in more established methods and styles.

About Time was a very different exhibition. Although Januszcak's attitude to *Women's Images of Men* appears far more sympathetic in an article published a month later (in the aftermath of the exhibition's commercial success) nonetheless, he argues, it is a 'blunt instrument' in comparison to *About Time* whose works appeal for 'understanding' with narratives that are 'compellingly, achingly sad' rather than simply clamouring, as he puts it, for 'attention'.³⁴ As many of the works in *About Time* featured live or recorded performances by the women artists, this inversion of the more common stereotype of the 'attention-seeking' woman performer is striking – if not only for the way in which Januszcak appears to replace one formula for another in establishing a dichotomy between the sex-crazed and 'savage' artists of *Women's Images of Men*, and the forlorn (but *modern*) damsels in distress of *About Time*.

The selected artists and art works in *About Time* were Bobby Baker (*My Cooking Competes*), Sarah Bradpiece (*Soap Service*), Catherine Elwes (*Each Fine Strand*), Rose Finn-Kelcey (*Mind the Gap*), Celia Garbutt (*Supermarket*), Rose Garrard (*Beyond Still Life*), Roberta Graham (*Short Cuts to Sharp Looks*), Judith Higginbottom (*Water into Wine*), Susan Hiller (*10 Months*), Tina Keane (*See-Saw: Can There Be A Dialogue*), Sonia Knox (*Spring 1980*), Alex Meigh (*What Do You Think Happened To Liz?*), Marcelina Mori (*Andro-gyne*), Sharon M Morris (*Family Portrait*), Hannah O'Shea (*A Visual Time-Span*), Carlyle Reedy (*Woman One*), Jane Rigby (*Counter Poise*), Julie Sheppard (*This Moment is Different*), Pat Whiteread (*Journey of Human Error*), Belinda Williams (*The Way We Are*), and Silvia Ziranek (*Rubbergloverama Drama*). Interestingly, while *About Time* escaped controversy – and thus, the attention of the mainstream press – generally speaking its works presented a

³⁴ Januszcak, 'A ghetto that holds half the world's population', p. 18.

greater challenge to established convention in terms of their formal innovation. In a publicity statement to the press Nairne wrote of *About Time*:

The emergence of video and performance as valid and infinitely flexible art forms seems to have coincided with a growing need among women artists to develop new languages in art which are more appropriate to their particular experience in our society. The personal is political, the private is public, the physical and emotional realities of life as a woman and as an artist are reflected in these works. They are only now becoming accepted as valid concerns in art, and the subject of many new and exciting works.³⁵

Nairne's assertion that 'the personal is political' and other paradigms of feminist thought were only at this point (i.e. in 1980) being 'accepted as valid' in art is certainly contestable.³⁶ Indeed, this thesis shows that women and feminist artists had been presenting performance and the time-based works which directly tackled feminist concerns at public art institutions in the UK since at least the late 1960s. Many of the artists featured in *About Time* had already shown performance and video works in national or international solo and group shows at the ICA, the Hayward Gallery, Battersea Arts Centre, Midland Gallery (Nottingham), Museum of Modern Art (Oxford), Victoria and Albert Museum, Serpentine Gallery, Bern Kunsthalle in Switzerland, Galleria Del Cavallino in Venice, Museum of Modern Art (New York), and more. Furthermore, Nairne fails here to acknowledge even the ICA's own history; for example, the success of the explicitly feminist mail-art project *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (9 June -

³⁵ Press pack for the 'women's season', TGA 955/7/6/20, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁶ The phrase 'the personal is political' had been in oral circulation since at least the late 1960s. American feminist activist Carol Hanisch accredits Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt with presenting 'The Personal Is Political' as the title of an essay by Hanisch which they published as editors of the anthology *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* in 1970, which may be the first instance of its published usage. See Carol Hanisch, *The Personal Is Political: The Women's Liberation Movement classic with a new introduction*, <<http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>> [accessed 24 April 2013].

21 July 1977) exhibition of Feministo works, which I will explain in more detail in Chapter Five, had led Kate Walker to declare that her ‘isolation is now broken’ three years earlier.³⁷

However, reaching a definition of what counts as being ‘accepted as valid’ when considered in the framework of art institutions is more difficult to determine, as indeed there were (and still are) certainly institutional prejudices and systematic obstacles set against women in art, as in all other fields of work. An ICA Bulletin in 1977 gives an indicative example of attempts to recognise the imbalances of power between genders where it states that ‘[i]n a recent article in *The Guardian* Caroline Tisdall quite rightly bemoaned the lack of exposure given to work by women artists. We are very keen to redress this injustice and are delighted to present a large group show of women’s work entitled *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife*’.³⁸ In her earlier article, ‘Avant-garde To All Intentions’, Tisdall pointed out the virtual exclusion of women artists from Gallery House in the early 1970s – which was a short-lived space, but daring in its curation of experimental and innovative practices.³⁹ Perhaps most famously Stuart Brisley’s *And for Today... Nothing* (1972), in which the artist lay in a bath of dirty water and rotting meat two hours a day for two weeks, took place there. Tisdall’s article points to the gendered systems of classification, appraisal, and taste which formulate ways in which work is deemed innovative or ‘avant-garde’, just as artists of colour did in relation to race and ethnicity (which I will say more about in Chapter Five). And so, *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* was self-consciously programmed by then ICA director Ted Little (although occurring under McAlister’s subsequent directorship),⁴⁰ before the controversial inclusion of Mary Kelly’s *Post-*

³⁷ ICA Bulletin July/September 1977, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Caroline Tisdall, ‘Avant-garde to All Intentions’, *Guardian* [Arts supplement], 25 August 1973, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Ted Little moved from administering the Birmingham Arts Lab when he was appointed director of the ICA in 1975. Defining features of his directorship at the ICA include: reduced membership for artists, seven days a week of cinema programmes, the designation of *New Galleries* spaces as venues for emerging artists, the promotion of formally challenging live work (particularly performance art and expanded cinema), and an overall commitment to ‘[u]nder exposed artists working in Britain’ and ‘[c]ontact with movements in the arts abroad’. See ICA Bulletin

Partum Document (1976) and COUM Transmissions *Prostitution* (1976) in the ICA's programme during the previous year put the gallery's funding from Arts Council of Great Britain [ACGB] in jeopardy of being reduced.⁴¹ While these events had destabilised Little's challenging, and for this reason laudable, directorship in the context of a relatively mainstream space, the 1980 'women's season' was not, therefore, the first time that feminist concerns had been afforded credibility by the ICA. Little's support for women working in performance has also been noted by Bobby Baker; during her formative early years as a practicing artist, Baker had been a member of a Performance Art Collective led by Sally Potter; Rose English was also a member, and it was hosted by Ted Little at the ICA café, where they would draft letters to funding bodies and newspapers, and plan events.⁴² The success of the Collective's *Performance Art Collective Christmas Party* (ICA, 1975) in which Baker showed her *Hot Bauble Christmas Tree* (in which guests are invited to pick and eat hot Christmas puddings from a tree), had led Little to invite Baker to show her most high-profile solo exhibition and performance so far at that time, namely *Art Supermarket* and *Perpetuity in Icing* (ICA, 1978).⁴³ Baker's example is one of many feminist performance interventions at the ICA from the late 1960s, many of which will be charted over the course of this thesis.

While the publicity material fails to situate the events within their prehistories, the significance of the ICA 'women's season' should not be underestimated as an important countermeasure against the mainstream publicly funded art world which continues to harbour

September-December 1975, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London. See also Anthony Everitt, 'Ted Little Obituary', *Guardian*, 12 August 1999 <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/aug/12/guardianobituaries>> [accessed 10 November 2015].

⁴¹ Barry Barker was the organiser of the *New Galleries* programme, which included Kelly's piece, although Little was held as ultimately responsible and pressurised to resign from the ICA following outrage in the mainstream press. See Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, pp. 45-8; Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation* (London: Black Dog, 1999), p. 6.24.

⁴² Bobby Baker, 'Chronicle of Selected Artworks', in *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, ed. by Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 28-80 (p. 35).

⁴³ Ibid.

deeply embedded prejudices against women, as well as other marginalised groups such as artists of colour and disabled artists. As Tisdall wrote in 1980, of a total of 700 applications for ACGB Visual Arts Awards that year, not a single woman was selected. Women were ignored, and deemed – as Tisdall saw it – ‘too shallow to create. That was the judgement of a member of the all-male panel’ (which, incidentally, included Allen Jones).⁴⁴ This typical marginalisation of women in art is persuasively identified and explained by Linda Nochlin in her now well-known essay ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’ (1971).⁴⁵ Nochlin points out that women have always made art, but that the systems of privilege which generate criteria of ‘great artists’ are constructed by men, and render women’s work shrouded or invisible to the public eye. Nochlin would later revise her argument in pointing out that, historically, some women have actually been valued and appreciated as artists in their specific localities,⁴⁶ but that these were generally outlier cases, as was the case for women’s presence in public arts around 1980. A few prominent examples from the preceding decade in London include the artist collective Womanpower’s *Exhibition on Womanpower: Women’s Art* at Swiss Cottage Library in 1973;⁴⁷ the *Women and Work* exhibition at South London Gallery (1975);⁴⁸ and the 1977 *Women’s Festival* at the Drill Hall – which were all publically funded but not located in mainstream

⁴⁴ Caroline Tisdall, ‘About Time’, in *About Time*, exh. cat., p. ii. See also, Lynne MacRitchie, ‘Women’s Performance: About Time’, *Performance*, 8 (1980), 6-9 (pp. 7-8).

⁴⁵ Nochlin, ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’, 22-39. Nochlin would later revisit her essay to clarify her theoretical position and that there are, in fact, an enormous wealth of historical women artists, and indeed many well-known in their own localities throughout the West; see Linda Nochlin, ‘Starting From Scratch: The Beginnings of Feminist Art History’, in *The Power of Feminist Art*, ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), pp. 130-137 (p. 137).

⁴⁶ Linda Nochlin, ‘Starting from Scratch’, p. 137.

⁴⁷ Organised by Womanpower artists Anne Berg, Elizabeth Moore, Monica Sjöö, Beverly Skinner and Rosalind Smythe. The exhibition received media attention primarily because of the inclusion of Monica Sjöö’s painting *God Giving Birth* (1968), which depicts god as a woman who is both black and white. See John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 104.

⁴⁸ For the *Women and Work* exhibition, Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt and Mary Kelly worked with local women working in factories in Bermondsey over a period of two years, documenting and representing their stories and conditions of labour.

spaces.⁴⁹ There were also regular exhibits by sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Elisabeth Frink (who had received a DBE and CBE respectively in the mid-to-late 1960s), and the work of Susan Hiller was also exhibited in an unusually high number of national solo shows in the mid-1970s.⁵⁰ Significantly, after feminist picketing of previous shows, including the previous year's first *Hayward Annual*, which included 32 men and only one woman, in 1978 the ACGB decided to allow five women – Liliane Lijn, Rita Donagh, Kim Lim, Tess Jaray and Gillian Wise Ciobaratu – to organise the second *Hayward Annual* in 1978.⁵¹ The critics' reaction to the show saw it as an amusing one-off 'twist' for the 'girls'; for instance, John Russell Taylor reported on what he described as 'ladies' night at the Hayward Gallery'.⁵² A year later, for the 1979 Annual, Helen Chadwick would curate alongside four men, resulting in a majority of male artists being exhibited, but with an 'ancillary programme' of performance including work by Bobby Baker, Silvia Ziranek, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and Anne Bean.⁵³ Unfortunately, the ACGB's commitment to women's art waned after this flurry of activity, as is evident in the previously cited exclusion of women from funding, and the next *Hayward Annual* in 1980 reverted to perfunctory curating of 32 men and only two women artists. This selection included Anthony Caro, whose monumental sculptures are exemplary of the 'gold club of art', as described by Bobby Baker in reference to her feelings of inadequacy produced by biases of art

⁴⁹ The *Women's Festival* was an arts festival featuring workshops, lectures, music, theatre, and art, and included a performance workshop by the Women Artists Collective, a screening of Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), and a Women's Liberation Music workshop. A copy of the programme can be found at 'Gig List: 1977', The Women's Liberation Music Archive, <<http://womensliberationmusicarchive.co.uk/j/>> [accessed 11 November 2015].

⁵⁰ It is worth drawing attention to the fact that, despite this success, Hiller, along with the other artists, still only received a fee of between £20 and £40 for her contribution to *About Time* (Hannah O'Shea exceptionally received £48). Notably, Carlyle Reedy was paid only £20 for her work, despite the fact that the London Poetry Secretariat had sent a cheque of £25 to the ICA in support of her work; thus, the gallery may have in effect charged Reedy to exhibit. See TGA 955/7/5/45, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁵¹ Griselda Pollock, 'Feminism, Femininity, and the *Hayward Annual* Exhibition 1978', *Feminist Review*, 2 (1979), 33-55 (p. 35). Pollock, however, criticises the exhibition in that it failed to be a threat to the male-dominated establishment. See also Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 104.

⁵² Arts Council of Great Britain, *Hayward Annual 1979*, exh. cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979). Catherine Elwes mistakenly omits the 1979 *Hayward Annual* from her history, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 104.

⁵³ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Hayward Annual 1979*, exh. cat.

education, and her later choice to move away from mainstream art institutions.⁵⁴ As it transpired, the ACGB's apparent engagement with feminist arguments was perhaps simply a product of, as Catherine Elwes puts it, 'mainstream tokenism'.⁵⁵ Therefore, regardless of whether the works presented in the ICA 'women's season' are imbued with overtly feminist politics, the artists' very appearance in itself in a central, publicly funded space, nonetheless posed a significant challenge to the male-dominated field at this point in history.

To return to Nairne's description of *About Time*, it is therefore particularly interesting to consider the idea of performance and video work as an emergent field occurring concurrently with the emergence of women artists' struggles for mainstream cultural legitimisation. Where art by women had previously been considered 'not serious' or not part of new experiments in art (as was still visible from the press response to *Women's Images of Men*) or, in the case of Gallery House, implicitly not a part of 'avant-garde' trajectories, *About Time* appears to celebrate the innovations of women working with time-based art forms in the UK. In affirmation of this, the ICA Bulletin of October 1980 claims that *About Time* 'provides an opportunity to see works by women artists working in the "third area", an aspect of art still relatively unknown to the general public', and that '*About Time* presents women's involvement in this area for the first time as a major exhibition in this country'.⁵⁶ While the categorisation of time-based art forms was (and is) in a constant state of flux, by this point they had entered into mainstream London venues for some time – for example in the form of Happenings from the mid-1960s, and then participatory and performance art through the 1970s. Such works had also seen bursts of funding interest with the establishment of the short-lived Performance Art

⁵⁴ See Michèle Barrett, 'The Armature of Reason', in *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, pp. 3-22 (p. 4).

⁵⁵ Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 104.

⁵⁶ TGA 955/13/5/111, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

Committee by the ACGB (c.1973-75).⁵⁷ However, where the organisers' introduction to the exhibition catalogue describes this type of work as a 'third area' practice, defined non-positively against more established forms (for Nairne it is neither painting nor sculpture, or in other usages neither visual art, nor theatre), the continuing relative marginality of performance seems evident. One view, which Kathy Battista argues, is that the rise of the women's liberation movement can be charted alongside a development whereby 'performance art became central to contemporary art practice'.⁵⁸ There is, however, a disconnection or tension here between the rise of both performance and feminist concerns in art, and the relative marginality or peripheral spaces occupied by artists working in these areas. This appears to have been the case in 1980, and, as Lois Keidan has recently reminded us, continues to be the case: while contemporary live art forms remain 'elusive to most mainstream commentators', their 'influence is pervasive'.⁵⁹ Battista's argument, then, may be more verifiable if rephrased to refer to the shift towards a more critical relationship between art practice and established art institutions, to which performance practices made a transformational contribution. While feminist performance practices were a leading component of this shift and the surrounding discourses, it seems they also remained in the margins of institutional representation.

While early 'third area' practices had received crucial institutional support from a network of UK venues including the ICA, Third Eye Centre in Glasgow, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, and the Arnolfini in Bristol, and a number of dedicated festivals (as I explained in the introduction), it is fair to say that such events were either unusual or set up as 'ancillary' to other, more centrally positioned practices of painting and sculpture. While 'third area'

⁵⁷ For fuller discussion of Arts Council funding policy in performance and related forms see Graham Saunders, 'The Freaks' Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-73', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), 32-45.

⁵⁸ Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 53.

⁵⁹ Lois Keidan, 'Live Art: the research lab for mass culture', *Guardian*, 22 October 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/oct/22/live-art-the-research-lab-for-mass-culture>> [accessed 23 October 2015].

practices were prominent and held a cachet status in experimental and artist-led contexts (such as in the early ‘lab’ environments of the Middle Earth club, the Drury Lane Arts Lab, and its later incarnation as IRAT), women and their practices were generally located in the sidelines – or virtually excluded altogether, as in the example of Gallery House. Indeed, many women actively chose to avoid, or work outside of, gallery spaces altogether, as Lynn MacRitchie suggests in her contribution to the *About Time* catalogue, instead favouring street-based, domestic, or geographically peripheral environments – and for good reasons.⁶⁰ In this sense, as women were marginalised in both mainstream *and* ‘alternative’ art spaces, the claims made in the *About Time* publicity that it was the ‘first time’ women’s contributions to such areas were seriously acknowledged in a mainstream, public space is in a certain sense plausible.

Rather than simply affirm and re-affirm the implicit marginality of an in-between or non-positively defined ‘third area’ practice, which is simultaneously complemented by the evident marginalisation of women artists, it is more constructive to consider the challenges to the status quo, and how ‘third area’ qualities can be claimed as a productive lens through which to examine the work and strategies of women artists in this area. In its focus on this ‘third area’, *About Time* was concerned with the formation of new languages in artistic practice. This takes place in the exploration of performance, video, installation, and the cross-fertilisation between these time-based forms, but also in terms of re-examining patterns and systems of art institutions. The women artists’ committee challenged prevailing ideas about curating and art institutions, as well as parameters of how an artist is defined. Unlike most exhibitions, which are led by professionally designated, often individual curators, *About Time* was created collectively, built up from an open call for proposals, and directly tackled questions

⁶⁰ Lynn MacRitchie, ‘About Time – historical background’, in *About Time*, exh. cat., pp. iii-vi (p. vi).

surrounding the art ‘star’ system by favouring the group show format.⁶¹ *About Time* also shifted focus away from objects produced solely in the studio, and showed works which foregrounded liveness, and in some cases improvisation, or elements of chance in not knowing how different media elements would interact with each other when installed.

The status and practices of many of the women artists also called into question ways in which the artist is defined professionally; while most of the *About Time* artists did have some form of art education, many utilised their kitchen tables or living rooms as studios during ‘in-between’ times – when not attending to other necessary work such as other waged labour, or child-care responsibilities.⁶² The more unfortunate aspect of this is that many of the UK-based artists featured in the ‘women’s season’ would eventually fall away from art practice altogether, or visibility in art institutional contexts. For instance, through the 1970s Sonia Knox, who showed her *Spring 1980* installation as part of *About Time*, made and exhibited work at Art Meeting Place, Acme Gallery, Artists for Democracy, Almost Free Theatre, Tate, Serpentine, and other mainland European and Irish venues, and was involved in the Women’s Workshop of the Artists’ Union and Women Artists Collective, but she stopped practicing as an artist altogether by 1986.⁶³ Knox has described the experience of ‘having been flattened, like a pancake’ and her feelings of being put ‘under a rock’ in the context of training in a male-led painting department, and the subsequent feelings of ‘liberation’ that came with seeing performance art for the first time in the 1970s. In developing her performance practice, Knox

⁶¹ Artists such as Bobby Baker have since pointed out the limitations of collective approaches in the sense that men continue to hold the limelight in solo shows, whereas women are more commonly asked to share platforms and funding. Bobby Baker commented on this in a discussion organised by Lois Weaver and Live Art Development Agency on the early days of feminist performance practice in the UK, 14 March 2014. This discussion took place as part of *Restock Rethink Reflect 3* research on Live Art and feminism; see, ‘How We Did It’, in *Are We There Yet? Study Room Guide on Live Art and Feminism*, ed. by Lois Weaver, Eleanor Roberts and Live Art Development Agency (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2015), p. 30.

⁶² Catherine Elwes, ‘Women’s Images of Men’ lecture, *Women’s Images of Men Study Day*, Nottingham Contemporary Gallery, 18 March 2014.

⁶³ Sonia Knox, interview with the author, London, 26 June 2014.

said that it allowed her to realise the potential of her own voice and presence, and ‘very, very gradually learning how to be *there*’.⁶⁴ However, Knox’s interest in practicing art (for her, as a form of activism) did not survive the rapidly changing contexts of the 1980s, during which she felt that the art world was fundamentally altered by Thatcherism. For others such as Roberta Graham and Celia Garbutt, their art institutional visibility waned beyond the 1980s, though they continue to make work.⁶⁵ Graham has cited her interdisciplinarity, multi-media practice, and interest in ‘unsellable’ and technologically outdated forms such as slide-tape as contributing factors to her lack of representation – and laments the loss of important spaces for formal experimentation such as the London Film-Maker’s Co-op, where she had worked, as important at the time for ‘giving people a chance’.⁶⁶ Commenting on her ‘kitchen-table-as-studio’ and fitting in work around school times, Silvia Ziranek has also said that her visibility and recognition as an artist was drastically affected by having children in the 1980s, citing the ‘taboo’ subject of motherhood as being bound up with a loss of self. Ziranek says she had to ‘struggle against’ an all-consuming commitment to her children in order to rediscover her sense of self as an artist, a situation which was aggravated by the ambivalence, or – potentially – the hostility, of art infrastructures and audiences to artists who are also mothers (these themes are discussed more in relation to a 1969 Happening by Carlyle Reedy in Chapter Five).⁶⁷

Where *Women’s Images of Men* has been perceived as daring for self-consciously breaking with prevalent conceptual art forms, by intervening into a contemporary art context which was perceived to be at odds with figurative painting and sculpture, it might be logically

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, Graham entered the art world from a young age as an ‘Oz kid’ in their ‘School Kids’ special edition, which was the subject of a high profile obscenity charge made against the publication in 1971. A photograph of 16 year old Graham in school uniform was published in the magazine under the caption ‘Jail Bait of the Month’. *Oz*, no. 28, 1970, p. 7. Garbutt continues to exhibit in small, local venues following her move to the Scottish Highlands in the early 1980s <<http://www.rhueart.co.uk/Artists/CeliaGarbuttResume>> [accessed 21 January 2015].

⁶⁶ Roberta Graham, interview with the author, London, 26 July 2013.

⁶⁷ Silvia Ziranek, interview with the author, London, 19 June 2013.

inferred that *About Time*, then, was more in keeping with the status quo of formal experimentation at the ICA. The Happenings, performance art, expanded cinema, installation and participatory art that had been taking place there since the 1960s comprise the notable contribution to the body of ‘experimental’, ‘serious’ and ‘avant-garde’ history to which Nairne, Elwes and others have referred. However, uses of the body in ‘time-based’ art and performance, themselves were a site of dispute in feminist approaches to making art. Conceptual artist Mary Kelly (who was born the US but based in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s) had been particularly vocal in her scepticism about performance as a mode of art-making for women. Her practice focussed intently on ways in which to represent the body without its literal presence. Most prominently, Kelly’s (previously cited) *Post-Partum Document* (1976) exhibition at the ICA consisted of a series of object-traces of her experience of motherhood, which included diary text, analytical drawings relating to her son’s infantile development, and used nappy liners framed and juxtaposed with feeding charts. Public outrage emerged in the mainstream press over the ‘dirty nappies’, fuelled by a wider context of attacks on public funding for arts, such as Tate’s purchase of Carl Andre’s ‘bricks’ (*Equivalent VIII*, 1966).⁶⁸ In a 1997 interview reflecting on the years preceding the ‘women’s season’, Kelly argued that

In the mid 1970s, a number of women used their own bodies or images to raise questions about gender, but it was not that effective, in part because this was what women in art were expected to do. Men were artists; women were performers. I wanted to question those essential places. [...] For instance I decided to use the vests in the Introduction [of *Post-Partum Document*] because I couldn’t really ‘figure’ the woman

⁶⁸ Roger Bray, ‘After the Tate’s bricks – On show at ICA... dirty nappies!’, *Evening Standard*, 14 October 1976, p. 5. Andre’s *Equivalent VIII* consists of 120 bricks stacked and assembled in a rectangle shape. Tate’s 1972 acquisition of the sculpture sparked media controversy over public funding for the arts in 1976, a context which I will explain in further detail in Chapter Four.

in a way that would get across what was going on, the level of fantasy that was involved, in an iconic way. I needed something that was more indexical, more like a trace.⁶⁹

Following her arrival in London in 1968 Kelly had worked closely with Laura Mulvey, particularly as both were members of the women's theory reading group The History Group in the early 1970s.⁷⁰ Therefore, Kelly may well have been influenced by Mulvey's theory of the male gaze and the way in which she identified patterns of fetishism and sexual objectification in representations of women in film.⁷¹ Within such schemas, women are defined by, and confined to, their bodies and the extent to which they comply with heteronormative standards of 'beauty' – patterns which have now been widely acknowledged, and continue to be identified and resisted by feminists, women and girls.⁷²

Kelly's strategy in the 1970s for escaping the perceived ubiquity of women performing under the caging gaze of men was to boycott using or depicting her body directly altogether. As Amelia Jones has written, Kelly – particularly via her essay 'Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism' (1984) – 'demotes body art to the provinces of a naïve essentialism – an untheorized belief in the ontology of presence and in an anatomical basis for gender'.⁷³ While Kelly's interest in formulating 'anti-essentialist' modes of art-making tackles crucial questions for feminism, her blanket refusal of bodily presence in art must be contested. For instance, part of Kelly's rationale for resisting performance as a feminist art mode is that '[c]learly the question of the

⁶⁹ Cited in Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Mary Kelly, interview with Lydia O'Ryan, *NLSC: Artists' Lives – Mary Kelly* (2004) [audio], National Life Stories Collection, British Library, London

⁷¹ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6-18.

⁷² For instance, women and girls' activism online is particularly visible with respect to the 'male gaze', in outing the hidden cosmetic and dieting regimes, as well as the capitalist imperatives underlying the 'perfect selfie'. In one recent example, mainstream media reported widely on Essena O'Neill's re-editing of her Instagram account to detail the efforts undergone to achieve her look in each image: see, 'Essena O'Neill quits Instagram claiming social media "is not real life"', *Guardian*, 3 November 2015

<<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/03/instagram-star-essena-oneill-quits-2d-life-to-reveal-true-story-behind-images>> [accessed 4 November 2015].

⁷³ Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 23.

body and the question of sexuality do not necessarily intersect'.⁷⁴ This point gestures to the fixity of heterosexist classifications of 'male' and 'female' bodies, but also – I argue, more significantly – elides practices in art and life which situate the changeability of the body as central sites of feminist, queer, trans, non-binary, and gender fluid identification and self-construction – not to mention the more general occlusion of the body as a site of sexual experience and pleasure.

It is perhaps easier to understand Kelly's position when considered as emerging in the 1970s context of feminist art in the US, where artists engaged in feminist art circles were aware of, or invested in, the emergence of 'cunt art' practices, such as by Judy Chicago, which sought to reclaim the vagina as beautiful, as a subject for art by women, and as a means of expressing women's experiences and sexualities. While such practices played a significant, productive role in consciousness-raising between women, there were also valid concerns about whether they enabled women's experience to escape perceptions of a supposed essential, universal womanhood.⁷⁵ However, as Jones points out in her powerful critique of Kelly's position, even where Kelly uses objects to 'stand in' for the body (such by displaying vests in *Post-Partum Document*), her practice still 'negotiate[s] the (female) body/self in its absence/presence', just as body-based works do.⁷⁶ Kelly also argues that performance reinforces psychoanalytic notions of female 'lack', and the 'lack' of penis and thus authority that is imbued in the woman's body in

⁷⁴ Mary Kelly, 'Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism', *Screen*, 22.3 (1981), 41-62 (p. 55).

⁷⁵ The Feminist Art Programs co-founded by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro at Fresno State College and California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 1970 and 1971 were ground-breaking in establishing productive feminist curricula, consciousness-raising, and art workshops for women. Participants have reported that as well as being of therapeutic value, they also enabled women to find new forms and subjects for their art practice. See Faith Wilding, 'The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-75', in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), pp. 32-47. The international influence and significance of the 'hugely creative' Feminist Art Program is attested to by Anne Bean, who described travelling there from London (where she had moved from South Africa) to study in the mid-1970s. Anne Bean, interview with the author, London, 9 July 2014.

⁷⁶ Jones, *Body Art*, p. 29.

her live appearance, while failing to account for her own work's reinforcement of notions of 'lack' and absence, or to critique the male-centred and sexist bases of such theories.⁷⁷ Kelly's theories were, however, highly influential for feminist art practice and interpretation. In retrospect, Catherine Elwes has highlighted 'the wider implications of what [Mary] Kelly represented and how she fitted into the general pattern of what was going on and what people were saying and feeling and thinking about the body. And how she was part of the division' in the 1970s.⁷⁸ Elwes refers to an evident binary between artists who chose to use their body, and those who actively avoided using their bodies, and conflicting attitudes between the two. This 'division' is reproduced again between women who perform clothed, and women who perform naked, which I will return to more fully in chapters three and four, particularly in relation to Cosey Fanni Tutti's *Magazine Actions*.

Taking an example from *About Time*, we can gain further understanding of the critical contexts from which Kelly's argument stems. In her notes for her performance *Beyond Still Life*, Rose Garrard wrote in the *About Time* catalogue that '[*Beyond Still Life*] has caused me to question my role as a woman who "turns herself into an object" (John Berger) and whose place in art history has been that of subject for, rather than creator of art'.⁷⁹ Garrard cites an argument popularised by John Berger in his *Ways of Seeing* BBC television series and book of 1972, which posits that European art history reflects a sociocultural convention whereby

[M]en act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Elwes cited in Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 24.

⁷⁹ Rose Garrard, 'Rose Garrard', in *About Time*, exh. cat., p. 27.

surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.⁸⁰

In other words, Berger argues that men simply *do* whereas women are *watched and watch themselves doing*. Where Berger says that the woman turns *herself* into an object, he actually refers to the sociocultural conditioning of women to exist within the schema of the male gaze. It is not so much to emphasise her complicity in the system of (male) surveyor and (female) surveyed, but that it is necessary for women to enact both roles simultaneously if they are to negotiate and survive a pervasive social order whereby women are praised or punished according to their appearance (and, I add, compliance with heterosexual orders of femininity). Berger illustrates this notion in his account of histories of the female nude in painting, and he points out ways in which women's nudity can be interpreted as linked variously to shame, women's sexual submissiveness to men, sexual competition between women, vanity, or possible pornographic or sex use-functions of women's bodies. Exceptions to these patterns were, Berger argued, evident in works where 'the painter's personal vision of the particular women he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator', and where the woman figure can be perceived as expressing a will of her own.⁸¹

There are pressing criticisms which must be made here: Berger only ever considers women in art from the vantage point of the male painter. Perhaps more importantly, the entire notion of a male 'surveyor' and female 'surveyed' binary in society relies on heteronormative assumptions that women's enactments of sex and gender identity (I deliberately use the singular here) are ultimately only ever directed as 'for', and defined by, men. However, in being influenced by feminist thought and addressing the role of women in art, Berger's highly visible contribution was nonetheless significant in its impact on conventions of art and critical practices

⁸⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972, rpt. London: Penguin, 1992), p. 41.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

- specifically, as the first popular account to establish the inherently gendered nature of vision. Berger also provided a platform from which to further critique the ‘violence’ inherent to assumptions that the ‘ideal spectator’ is always a man (and, in Berger’s analysis, implicitly heterosexual).⁸² This theory reinforces Kelly’s argument that women had been perceived as ‘performers’, and that this was a category that would likely be desirable to escape. It also bears some relation to Mulvey’s important theory of the male gaze, which also outlines ways in which representations of women (specifically in film) endlessly re/construct them as erotic spectacle. While Mulvey’s study offered more nuanced analyses of the effects of the fetishisation of women’s bodies, both her and Berger’s theories have since been contested, particularly in that they are both built on models of power in which the woman is always *put upon*, and limited in her agency in constructing her own identifications or determining herself. I might also add here that both models also ignore or obfuscate the issue of how *women’s* pleasure or desire figures in - or might inform - representations of women. In the 1990s, queer feminists such as Teresa de Lauretis and Elizabeth Grosz powerfully challenged the heteronormative assumptions of these theories, for instance by calling attention to women’s desire for other women - which weren’t accounted for - and by pushing at the limits of (or strategically refusing) psychoanalysis and its potentially containing or normalising effects.⁸³

In *Seeing Differently*, Amelia Jones situates feminist models of thought such as Mulvey’s, which were influenced by psychoanalysis and based in theories of fetishism as key to approaches to identity in the 1970s. Jones makes a convincing case for re-thinking the ‘simplifications and binaries of 1970s-style identity politics’ and their ‘truisms’, recognising their contribution while at the same time moving towards understandings of identification as always

⁸² Ibid., p. 58

⁸³ Elizabeth Grosz, ‘Analyzing Perverse Desire (An Interrogation of Teresa de Lauretis’s *The Practice of Love*)’, in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 155-71.

shifting and contingent.⁸⁴ However, in taking a closer look at Garrard's *Beyond Still Life* as informed by such theories, the distinction between 1970s practices focussed on issues of identity on the one hand, and contemporary theories of identification on the other, becomes more complicated. Garrard, as Bev Bytheway has explained, was 'part of a pioneering group of women artists in Britain whose presence and practice were to shape the key cultural issues of the [1980s] and beyond'.⁸⁵ In her work, Garrard 'was searching to create new methods for the telling of new stories, invested with meanings for women', and was concerned with 'socially orientated and communicative' practices which questioned the role of art in society.⁸⁶ There are a number of sources from which we can gather information about this event: there is Bytheway's research and Garrard's own monograph, published in the mid-1990s (*Archiving My Own History*, 1994); documents in the ICA archive such as the artist's proposal notes; and – importantly – a series of reviews and short critical writings that were undertaken by the *About Time* artists, as they documented and commented on each other's work alongside supportive critics and friends such as Lynn MacRitchie. The latter writings were originally published in *P.S. [Primary Sources]* journal and they offer valuable information on how the live events unfolded.⁸⁷ From these sources combined, we can gather that *Beyond Still Life* is a 40 minute performance work with pre-recorded sound, and an installation of a classical-style 'Greek' alabaster vase, a book depicting the myth of Pandora, and a dead sparrow, arranged on plinths. There is a colour television/monitor set up for a live feed (Fig. 2). Finally, two plaster-cast sculptures of the artist holding copies of the same vase sit in the gallery. As Garrard writes in her notes, this arrangement of objects represents a still life which she painted as a child.⁸⁸ In the performance, Garrard enters into a dialogue with the pre-recorded sound, and the viewer's

⁸⁴ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, pp. xx, xxvi.

⁸⁵ Bev Bytheway, 'Preface', in *Rose Garrard: Archiving My Own History*, ed. by Bev Bytheway and Rose Garrard (Manchester and London: Cornerhouse and South London Gallery, 1994), p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard et al, 'About Time at the I.C.A', *P.S.*, 6 (Winter 1980), 8-14.

⁸⁸ Garrard, *Archiving My Own History*, p. 27.

gaze is directed between the live performer interacting with the objects, her screened double image, and her third sculptural selves. As she does this, a narrative of a childhood memory, in which Garrard passively watched her brother shoot a bird dead, is built up via Garrard's live and recorded voices. The artist provides some critical context for her performance where she has said: 'By looking beyond "still life" into the surroundings, a matrix of meaning is gradually uncovered which link the trivial to the important, the personal to the universal, the everyday to the historic, the spectator to the performer.'⁸⁹

Beyond Still Life evidently situates Garrard as a woman 'performer', and draws attention to the notion, drawn from Berger, of women as both surveyors and surveyed; she is surveyed by the spectators as she surveys her screened, object, aural – and mnemonic – selves. The collage or suturing of the different elements of the work would have been evident to the spectators as she interacts with them, building up the memory as constituted not only by her 'real' live voice, but by a chorus of voices. These voices then fragment the narrative in arriving from different temporal locations – they tell of a memory in retrospect, or they tell in 'real time' – as well as offering different points of view on Garrard's childhood event. In one sense, the artist mimics her past self as a young girl; recreating the act of *watching* her brother *doing* – while also being watched – she thus embodies a subjugated role and reinforces the gender binary described by Berger. Simultaneously, however, Garrard highlights her awareness of her ascribed position as a visual object, which is further emphasised through the juxtaposition of her body and the classical-style vase. As she relays a textured narrative of complex inner lives, of memory and the affective experience of watching her brother kill an animal, she thus garners agency of another kind, drawing attention to her live presence, tissue and vitality, and the personal-political act of memory. In the liveness of her own body, Garrard amplifies the

⁸⁹ Garrard, *About Time*, exh. cat.

violence of representations of women, such as Allen Jones', which cast them as fetish-object dolls without the capacity for inner life or independent will.

As she imitates her own mirror-image in the video and sculpture, Garrard foregrounds the woman as 'performer', as both surveyor and surveyed, but – crucially – she also draws new lines and alters the definitions that demarcate such a space. In noting the liveness of *Beyond Still Life*, it is important to recognise that this 'life' takes place not only in relation to the artist performing with her own body, but also in the multiplicity of other selves taking place across the work. Rather than simply reaffirm the notion of the ascribed woman-as-performer, to which Berger and Mulvey both refer, Garrard utilises and challenges the logics of such an idea. Embedded in *Beyond Still Life* is a proposition that the self is compositely constructed, or that there can be a multiplicity of selves, all authorised, albeit in different ways, to tell the story, as they interact between and across dimensions of both the recorded and the live. This then allows for the rearticulation of the woman-as-performer – not in relation to a lost or absent 'authentic' self, which in Berger's terms may only be accessible to men (who simply *do* things outside of the schema of the male gaze), but in terms of critiquing the very foundations of what an authentic self might consist of. To return to Amelia Jones' apt acknowledgement of a prevalent frustration with the 'simplifications and binaries of 1970s-style identity politics' in contemporary criticism and practice, examples such as Garrard's encourage us to look again at those practices of the 1970s as complex, and subject to critique in their own contemporary contexts. In *Beyond Still Life* the 'third' area emerges, not only in straddling the 'trivial and the important', or in that which links the 'everyday to the historic', as Garrard has said, but also in both connecting and challenging borders between the 'surveyor' and the 'surveyed', the recorded and the live, the 'performer' and the 'artist', the 'performed' and the 'real', and the

personal and the political.⁹⁰ Where Kelly outlined her suspicion of the ‘essential places’ of men as ‘artists’ and women as ‘performers’, as cause to flee from performance,⁹¹ Garrard productively critiques the logics of the constructed binary underlying such a notion.

In resistance to the subservient doll-women of Allen Jones’ furniture – which represent women’s bodies as vessels or static sex objects – *About Time* artists re/claimed their bodies as sites of subjectification, and self-determination. In contrast to Kelly’s view that performing constituted a kind of complicity with patriarchal systems of looking, Catherine Elwes argues that ‘[p]erformance art offers women a unique vehicle for making that direct unmediated address. [...] She is author, subject, activator, director and designer.’⁹² Setting aside the complex questions of the possibility of an ‘unmediated’ address through representation for the moment,⁹³ Elwes here privileges the *activity* of performing as a kind of empowerment, which is placed in contrast to the passivity and submissiveness of women being held captive by the gaze of the (male) surveyor. The relationship between the emergence of performance art and other ‘third area’ practices, and mainstream recognition of feminist concerns in art becomes increasingly evident in the ‘new languages’ of *About Time*. The ‘third area’ framework can be used not only in reference to the formal otherness of performance and time-based works, but also – as the women utilise their own bodies and experiences as materials for their works – it can be productively reinscribed as the connecting and muddling of boundaries between more traditionally separate spheres of the private and public, the personal and the political.

In an interview with Kathy Battista, Rose Finn-Kelcey recalled that ‘[p]articularly in painting, the weight of tradition had seemed so male dominated. For women it was liberating to

⁹⁰ Garrard, *About Time*, exh. cat.

⁹¹ Cited in Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 29.

⁹² Catherine Elwes, ‘Floating Femininity: A Look At Performance Art by Women’, in *Women’s Images of Men*, pp. 164-93 (p. 164).

⁹³ I return to questions of presence and absence in Chapter Two.

have access to open territory that was fresh, that we could explore, or use in an autobiographical way.⁹⁴ The fact that performance had not hitherto been saturated by men's images of women created a permissive space for women's subjectification in coming alive as artists and subjects (not exclusively objects).⁹⁵ I will elaborate on this throughout the thesis, but particularly in Chapters Three and Four, where I sustain this question of women's bodies within the permissive space of performance as subject to interpretation as defiled or defiling in the context of museums and commercial galleries.

About Time, then, affirmed the making of work which entered into new 'third areas' across the personal and political as a feminist strategy in performance. In opening out their 'everyday' and autobiographical content to the gallery spectators, as many of the *About Time* artists did, they contributed to a demystification process, targeted at what Lynn MacRitchie refers to as the perceived 'strangeness' of both women's lives and art, and 'live or mixed media work'; as MacRitchie points out in the *About Time* catalogue, 'it is strange simply because it is rarely seen'.⁹⁶ For example, Hannah O'Shea's multimedia installation *A Visual Time-Span* consisted of audio tapes and slide carousels set aside Super 8 projectors projecting two films – using a 'split screen' method of projection – which depict elements of the artist's life as well as 'fantasy selves'. In her proposal for the piece, O'Shea states her interest in 'extending the boundaries of what is considered to be within the realms of visual art and the "permissible" content' through her use of the personal, and that she has 'chosen to include the relatively unspoken and undescribed life of women and through my work allow for that voice to be heard and for that experience to be validated'. She adds, '[m]y work should be seen as part of a

⁹⁴ Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 58

⁹⁵ While not 'saturated' by women's images of men, I also note here that fields of performance practice were certainly not immune to them. For example, prominent artists including Yves Klein (particularly his *Anthropométries* series, 1960), Hermann Nitsch, and Allan Kaprow had all utilised women as tools for the creation of, and as objects within, their performance works from the late 1950s and through the 1960s.

⁹⁶ MacRitchie, 'About Time – historical background' p. iii.

much more general claim for the validity of the female experience [in its] critical assessment of a society which largely functions to negate and suppress that critical expression'.⁹⁷ O'Shea's work, like Garrard's *Beyond Still Life* and others featured in *About Time*, again challenges boundaries of form in her use of multiple elements – of sound, slide, and video – and intertwined the personal with the political in representing everyday and domestic life, as well as footage from feminist and gay liberation marches in the 1970s.⁹⁸

This approach of 'documenting' and examining traces of the everyday in formally challenging ways bears more obvious similarity to conceptual art strategies deployed by Kelly in her *Post-Partum Document*, as well as UK artist Judy Clark's important *Issues* (1973) exhibition at the artist-run gallery The Garage in Covent Garden. *Issues* consisted of 'traces of the human body' such as Clark's nail clippings, menstrual blood, and tissues stained with her partner's semen set inside Perspex;⁹⁹ like O'Shea's later works, it experimented with formal boundaries between media, and what can be classified, claimed, or appropriated as 'art'. Again, the relationship here between uses of the body in performance, and object-based conceptual art which worked with traces of the body, undermines Kelly's articulation of an incompatibility between the two (for Kelly, as respectively 'bad' and 'good' strategies for feminist art).

If we refer to Julia Kristeva's *The Powers of Horror* (1982) this type of meddling with the borders of more traditional definitions of art, both in terms of content (nail clippings as art), and form (Super 8 home-movies as art), can be considered in the realms of the abject. As Kristeva writes, 'We may call [the abject] a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the

⁹⁷ Hannah O'Shea, *About Time* proposal, TGA 955/7/5/45, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London

⁹⁸ A brief account of O'Shea's work is given in the online *re.act.feminism* archive: 'Hannah O'Shea: Litany for Women Artists', *re.act.feminism* <<http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=119&e=>> [accessed 6 November 2015].

⁹⁹ Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 32.

contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger.¹⁰⁰ While in the most immediate sense associated with mechanisms of repulsion from ‘filth’ (excrement, vomit, menstrual blood, that which defiles, and so on), Kristeva argues that ‘[it] is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.’¹⁰¹ In the case of O’Shea’s *A Visual Time Span* it is the use of that which is normally discarded, of minutiae of experiences of (subjugated) women, home-made Super 8 movies, and disputing distinctions between the ‘real life’ documentation, and the ‘fantasy’ film footage that threatens order.¹⁰² A review by Maggie Warwick also tells of aspects of the abject coming into play in the performance of the work in the context of *About Time*. In her account, Warwick writes:

The most interesting part of the performance was when [O’Shea] stopped the film and explained that what she had intended to show (on the film) had been carried out by a friend who had requested that it not be shown. Hannah O’Shea then mimed the actions of her friend, describing how she had removed the tampon from herself, smelled, tasted and smeared her body with her own menstrual blood, finally writing her name on the window.¹⁰³

Building on the abject corruption of film, slide, and audio as distinct artistic forms, this performance element of O’Shea’s work brings the feminine and the maternal body of Kristeva’s abject into focus. Menstrual blood ‘stands for the danger’ and ‘threatens the relationship between the sexes’; as the feminine body leaks it cannot be contained, and holds

¹⁰⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁰² In the correspondence concerning *About Time*, O’Shea remarked that the use of Super 8 film allowed her to make work at home while also caring for her young child. TGA 955/7/7/66, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁰³ Elwes, Garrard et al, ‘About Time at the I.C.A’, p. 14.

the potential to contaminate the patriarchal body (which is constructed as safely sealed and whole) and violate social order.¹⁰⁴ O'Shea's oral representation of this scene, which is cut from the film, reflects the way in which, for Kristeva, and in the framework of the abject, the maternal woman is 'split in two', between 'an awkward, modest love, tinged with a chaste and guilt-laden reserve', which occurs in O'Shea's 'protection' of the audience and her friend from the moving image – even if at the woman in the film's own request. This then contrasts with the excess and horror of the woman who performs a potentially 'perverse' act with her menstrual waste, typified in the final act of narcissism, as she writes her own name on the window with the blood, and pollutes what surrounds her.¹⁰⁵

It must be said that while Warwick identifies qualities of the abject at play in *A Visual Time Span*, she also incidentally colludes with the kind of 'patrilineal filiation' (in Kristeva's terms) that attempts to subdue the generative power of the feminine body.¹⁰⁶ She praises O'Shea for the way in which she negotiates how to 'show' but not show the act, as 'she managed to bridge the difficult gap between the private and public with great delicacy and sensitivity, avoiding the voyeuristic aspect of film but at the same time raising questions about "the acted" and "the real" experience'.¹⁰⁷ Though Warwick is writing from a position of support and 'critical generosity' for O'Shea's work,¹⁰⁸ she also reinforces Mulvey's prevalent notion that women can only be experienced in film via 'voyeurism', or through the male gaze. Within such terms, the coarse and threatening 'sex' of the woman's abject body is sanitised by the 'delicacy and sensitivity' of O'Shea's representation, which must be critiqued. It is also not entirely clear what the questions of 'acted' and 'real' are that Warwick refers to in relation to *A Visual Time Span*. However, to refer again to Berger's notion of interplay between roles of both 'surveyor' and the

¹⁰⁴ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 15-16, 157.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰⁷ Elwes, Garrard et al, 'About Time at the I.C.A', p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Critical generosity is theorised by Jill Dolan, as I will go on to explain.

‘surveyed’ in women, O’Shea’s work might be thought of in broader terms, as representing a cyclical process whereby the artist is both filmmaker and film star, as life informs art, and art informs life. This muddling between life and art as artistic practice is a prevalent theme for women artists working with performance through the 1970s, and I will return to this in Chapter Four, in relation to Cosey Fanni Tutti’s work in the mid-1970s, and in Chapter Five – particularly in relation to Carlyle Reedy’s usage of the maternal body in a work she had performed at the ICA as early as 1969.

A Visual Time Span, then, like other works exhibited in *About Time*, offers opportunities to enact fantasy selves and metamorphosis through performance, de-stabilising distinctions between the ‘real’ and the ‘performed’, and indeed ‘art’ and ‘not art’. Possible ‘third areas’ of feminist performance practices can also be well illustrated by taking the example of Bobby Baker’s *About Time* work, *My Cooking Competes*. Adrian Heathfield has written of an abject ‘in-between’ in Baker’s work, particularly in reference to her use of food as an object without clear borders.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, in *My Cooking Competes* Baker’s performance takes the format of a cookery competition in a ‘village fête’ style, with exhibits of the artist’s cookery (for example, ‘the most skilfully and speedily made cup of instant coffee’, ‘the most tempting babies [*sic*] dinner’) displayed along a long trestle table, and the ‘expert’ audience are asked to judge her ‘efforts and abilities as a housewife and artist’, while Baker describes her cooking methods. In her proposal, the artist writes:

I see this performance as being a development of the ideas I was concerned with in ‘packed lunch’ (hayward annual 1979 etc) where I was examining how important the cooking and organizational skills acquired by women in our society are in establishing their status, and what that status is. I was interested in the idea of elevating my trivial

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Barrett, ‘The Armature of Reason’, p. 13.

domestic tasks, skills and products to the position of ‘art works’ and thereby questioning the value of these products and their potential as creative objects. [...] I should like to question the value of competition both for women in the home and in the art world and to consider whether it is important for women to become more competitive or whether the structure of our society can be changed or developed to avoid competition.¹¹⁰

Baker questions the ‘hidden competition’ imposed both on women as housewives to ‘succeed’ as the ideal woman, and in the art world in respect to the ideas of ‘success’ attached to reviews and public acclaim. Baker’s proposal is particularly significant for the artist in relation to her previous exhibitions at the ICA. On the occasion of *Art Supermarket*, *Perpetuity in Icing*, and a retrospective of performance documentation in 1978, her work was the subject of a scathing review by Caroline Tisdall, who had written in the *Guardian*:

There’s plenty of food for philistine thought at the ICA this month. It’s a nauseating display of warmed-up old jokes about art in the shape of supermarket food. The jokes are as cheap as the 10p prices, samples: Kwick Collage Kit, Shredded Thought, Tonal Value Dinner, packed in plastic and sold off the shelf.¹¹¹

Tisdall did not acknowledge (or perhaps did not even see) the *Perpetuity in Icing* performance, or the ‘retrospective’ display of Andrew Whittuck’s photographs of her previous works *An Edible Family in a Mobile Home* (1976) and *Mastering the Art of Piping* (1977), exhibited as part of Baker’s show. *Art Supermarket* invited visitors to buy small objects made by Baker out of packaging materials and sugar, with the price increasing the more you bought, as over the duration of ten days the installation was slowly destroyed by the purchases.¹¹² Tisdall described it as ‘sugar coating for silly games’ and a ‘hypocritical attempt [...] to question the foibles of art’

¹¹⁰ Bobby Baker, *About Time* proposal, TGA 955/7/7/66, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹¹¹ Caroline Tisdall, ‘ICA: Supermarket’, *Guardian*, 10 June 1978, p. 11.

¹¹² Bobby Baker, ‘Chronicle of Selected Artworks’, pp. 44-5.

in the context of the ICA's public funding and its relationship to big business, citing the fact that Cob Stenham, who was financial director at the corporation Unilever and chair of the ICA Council, had recently characterised the gallery as 'a supermarket for the Arts'.¹¹³ On the contrary to Tisdall's characterisation of Baker's strategies as centred on 'cheap' jokes and 'hypocritical' and 'silly' games, I argue that her early ICA works *Art Supermarket*, *Perpetuity in Icing*, and – in *About Time – My Cooking Competes*, offer substantial critiques and ironisations of precisely the art institutional machinations that were assumed beyond Baker's critical capacity. Where Baker says 'I should like to question the value of competition both for women in the home and in the art world',¹¹⁴ she not only calls for solidarity amongst women in resistance to capitalist patriarchal art markets and institutions, she also bolsters a provocative suggestion, already evident in her works, that worlds of the home and of art are comparable or analogous as sites of gendered labour – which may be exploited to both negative *and* positive effects.

Although Baker also thought *Art Supermarket* a 'failure' that she could retrospectively learn from, Tisdall's harsh review had a devastating effect and left the young artist unable to work throughout the following year; the effect of Baker's perception that Tisdall assumed she was a man has also had the lasting effect of the artist still introducing herself as 'a woman and an artist' today.¹¹⁵ Such instances throw into sharp relief the importance of 'critical generosity', as theatre scholar Jill Dolan (drawing from David Román) has said, in the dialogic relationship between artists and critics or spectators, particularly as a feminist strategy.¹¹⁶ In the second edition of her book *The Feminist Spectator in Action: Feminist Criticism for the Stage and Screen*, which draws on a selection of theatre, film and television reviews originally written for

¹¹³ Tisdall, 'ICA: Supermarket'.

¹¹⁴ Bobby Baker, *About Time* proposal.

¹¹⁵ Bobby Baker, 'Chronicle of Selected Artworks', pp. 45-6.

¹¹⁶ Jill Dolan, 'Critical Generosity', *Public: A Journal of Imagining America*, 1.1-2 (2013) <<http://public.imaginingamerica.org/blog/article/critical-generosity-2/>> [accessed 10 November 2015].

her blog of the same name, Dolan deploys her concept of a feminist ‘critical generosity’ which counters more established critical relationships of masculinist traditions, whereby critics assume a position of ‘objective’, frequently denigrating separation from artists.¹¹⁷ Dolan proposes an alternative relationship based on mutual ‘precise, productive, and generative’ critical engagement (as opposed to a nonspecific ‘cheerleading’), which fundamentally revises institutional dynamics by recognising and building upon the symbiotic, personal *and* political characteristics of the shared sociality of the field of arts production.¹¹⁸ This ethical rubric includes the work of artists as well as the work of critics and scholars, and I incorporate Dolan’s ‘critical generosity’ as a component of my research method throughout. Particularly, I do this by pursuing the generative feminist possibilities of each work considered (including instances where the marginality or fragmentary quality of their archival representation make this a difficult historiographical task), and by carefully selecting targets for critical offensives (particularly, where others have yet to identify them specifically, or fail to acknowledge them, as prevalent manifestations of patriarchal patterns of power).

Tisdall’s failure to identify the political and feminist efficacy of Baker’s ostensibly ‘silly’ strategies brings into focus yet another ‘third area’ at play – between, and of both, the political (the ‘serious’) and the comical (the ‘not serious’). Baker has consistently refused either to be contained by seriousness, or to dilute the political energy of laughter throughout her practice; for instance, on seeing Baker’s *Drawing on a Mother’s Experience* (1988), which marks Baker’s return to the ICA and art-making after an eight-year hiatus,¹¹⁹ Marina Warner has

¹¹⁷ Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator in Action: Feminist Criticism for the Stage and Screen*, 2nd edition (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Jill Dolan, ‘Critical Generosity’.

¹¹⁹ Following *About Time* Baker withdrew from making art to focus on raising her children. She says of this period, ‘I later realised, I found it extremely hard to see myself as an artist once I had children. I lost my sense of “self” and status alarmingly quickly.’ Incorporating her experience of motherhood, as ‘isolating, bewildering, boring, frustrating and joyful at the same time’, directly as part of her art proved to be an important and successful strategy;

described the vivid ‘cries and sighs, hoots and giggles’ of the audience mingling with responses of ‘hush and tears’.¹²⁰ Drawing on experiences of failure, anxiety, awkwardness, and the stresses of maternal and gendered labours in the home, *My Cooking Competes* creates an interplay between the skills required to domestically ‘perform’ according to what is expected of women, and the inevitability of falling short of comically absurd standards. Audience-participants are asked to bear witness to the judging of Baker’s cookery, as she moves along the table, describing her feelings about each dish, ‘from boredom, to anxiety, to pleasure’, before pinning on another rosette to her white ‘lab’ or work coat with each judgement.¹²¹ As the only apparent competitor, Baker will inevitably be the competition winner, but also loser, and so is doomed to perpetual inadequacy and potentially subjective incoherence, but also multiplicity. She has explained: ‘I wanted to encapsulate and critique my experience as a young mother at the time; my ambivalence about my role; my boredom and frustration; my loss of significant status; my pride. It succeeded on those terms.’¹²² The inevitability of the ‘competition’ (a rosette for every dish) draws attention to the arbitrariness of ways in which value judgements are made and conferred, as well as forcing the viewer-participants to confront their complicity with this system as they collectively critique the artist’s efforts in her presence. The work produces an encounter which is awkwardly funny, but also touches on the reality of the strains on mental health and well-being to women caused by competitive constructions of femininity and gendered imperatives of ‘productivity’ of the home.

My Cooking Competes leads me to return to another of Mary Kelly’s criticisms of performance as a mode of feminist art-making. As Amelia Jones has pointed out, both Kelly

Baker says, ‘I had found a subtly subversive political voice that communicated my anger in a bearable way’. Bobby Baker, ‘Chronicle of Selected Artworks’, pp. 47-9.

¹²⁰ Marina Warner, ‘Bobby Baker: The Rebel at the Heart of the Joker’, in *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, pp. 95-107 (p. 104).

¹²¹ Baker, ‘Chronicle of Selected Artworks’, p. 47.

¹²² Ibid.

and Griselda Pollock have made arguments against women artists using their own bodies in performance on the basis that, as Kelly said in 1982, '[m]ost women artists who have presented themselves in some way, visibly, in [their] work have been unable to find the kind of distancing devices which would cut across the predominant representations of woman as object of the look, or question the notion of femininity as a pre-given entity.'¹²³ While Kelly's argument is sheltered by the generalised caveat of 'most women', *My Cooking Competes* (like her later *Drawing on a Mother's Experience*) offers a strong instance of an artist utilising her own body in performance, while constantly employing 'distancing devices'. Baker visibly critiques and undermines constructions of femininity by focussing on the labours required to fulfil notions of the 'feminine', as well as, quite often, her struggles and failures to live up to them. In the *About Time* catalogue, film and video artist Sally Potter remarks that '[s]ome performance artists might describe their work as a kind of anti-skill, to differentiate their way of performing from the acting skills of characterisation. Performance is seen as "doing" – an activity which is being watched rather than a part being played'.¹²⁴ Here, by foregrounding the 'doing' rather than embodying an 'acting' role to convince an audience, Baker's 'real' and 'performer' selves are, again, muddled and highlight the absurdity of how performances of gender are scripted, and how judgements are made of them. Furthermore, in *My Cooking Competes*, Baker makes that which is routine – instant coffee and babies' dinners – into something strange and unfamiliar, and coaxes the audience-participants out of habitual patterns of perception, and towards a more raised consciousness of everyday actions.¹²⁵ Lynn MacRitchie's account of *My Cooking Competes* describes a particular moment:

¹²³ Kelly cited in Jones, *Body Art*, p. 24.

¹²⁴ Sally Potter, 'On Shows', in *About Time*, exh. cat., pp. vii-ix (p. vii)

¹²⁵ I will elaborate further on relationships between 1970s performance practices and feminist consciousness-raising in my second chapter.

Perhaps the point that set most heads nodding (and nods and little smiles of delighted recognition kept breaking out, rippling among the women in the audience) was the description of pouring icing sugar into a bowl. During this, always, a fine cloud of sugar particles will rise into the air, settling eventually on the storage jars ranged on the shelf. A collar of sugar crystals and dust is thus inevitably, inescapably formed, and the jars must be removed from the shelf, washed and dried, the shelf dusted and prepared for their return.¹²⁶

At this point, the ‘delighted recognition’ of a mundane, but nonetheless veritable part of domestic labour, produces criticality between the artist and the audience-participants as they consciously reflect on their everyday realities. Baker’s mode of performance can thus be clearly linked to historical antecedents of distancing in art, such as Bertolt Brecht’s theory of a distancing (or alienation) effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) in acting.¹²⁷ Peter Bürger posits that as a prevalent strategy in avant-garde art, distancing was deployed in opposition to more traditional notions of taste as ‘free and disinterested’ from society (such as Immanuel Kant’s autonomous and mystical ‘sublime’), and a supposed political neutrality of art institutions.¹²⁸ However, Bürger also argues that the wider project of historical avant-gardes to bring about the sublation of art and life – of which distancing was one strategy – had failed by the time of the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s.¹²⁹ While Bürger’s theory suggests that avant-gardism had, by the 1970s, become subsumed into existing institutional frameworks of art, Baker’s is one example of the continuing presence of art (in the form of *feminist* art) which urgently contested such spaces. To further re-affirm the established relationship between feminist performance and the

¹²⁶ Elwes, Garrard et al, ‘About Time at the I.C.A’, p. 14.

¹²⁷ Jill Dolan describes Brecht’s theory – which, she says, sought to ‘demystify the dominant ideology masked by conventional theatre’ – in relation to developments in feminist theatre in Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator*, p. 14.

¹²⁸ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 44.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

development of distancing effects, a most prominent example of feminist theory which undoes Kelly's notion of the two as incompatible, or at odds with each other, is Elin Diamond's 'Brechtian Theory / Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism' (1988).¹³⁰ Diamond points out that while feminist theatre criticism in the 1970s and early 1980s had 'attended more to the critique of the gaze than to the Brechtian intervention that signals a way of dismantling the gaze', there is nonetheless a long history of artistically and politically effective distancing techniques in women's art and performance – citing 17th-century examples in the plays of Aphra Behn.¹³¹ These types of work, Diamond details, make visible the apparatus of their production, are predicated on dialogic exchange between historically and socially situated artists and spectators, and enabled multiple and open-ended interpretations.¹³² Writing primarily from a perspective of theatre criticism, Kim Solga has recently argued that Diamond's essay is 'arguably the single most influential piece of writing in the feminist performance canon', which points to the prevalence of such strategies.¹³³ In *The Feminist Spectator*, Jill Dolan has also offered an account of the proliferation of 'neo-Brechtian' feminist performance (particularly feminist theatre groups) through the 1980s, for example in the work of US artists Karen Finley, Spiderwoman Theatre, and Holly Hughes.¹³⁴

Equally keen to disrupt the polite and sombre auto-environment of the art gallery, Silvia Ziranek presented a similarly comic exploration of household routines in her performance. As the proposal sheet for the piece reads: '*Rubber Gloverama (Drama)* is of domestic origin and intrigue. It will deal with female adherence to / involvement with / glamorisation of / dependence on and abhorrence of the home / monogamy / subservience / indisposability, and

¹³⁰ Elin Diamond, 'Brechtian Theory / Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism', *TDR*, 32.1 (1988), 82-94.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 91, 92.

¹³³ Kim Solga, *Theatre & Feminism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 16.

¹³⁴ Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator*, p. 14.

chrysanthemums.’¹³⁵ More so even than Baker’s work, Ziranek’s has a quality of theatre, camp humour and ironic showiness, as well as heightened attention to *mise en scène*. Januszczak’s previously cited *Guardian* review of *About Time* described *Rubbergloverama Drama* as the most ‘verbose’ of the works, and seems to commend the artist (irritatingly, as it ascribes gendered assumptions of the nattering and failing housewife) in that ‘she blames herself as much as her husband’ for their ‘suburban rut’.¹³⁶ Catalysing more traditional forms of poetry, theatre, design, and visual art, Ziranek’s ‘verbose’ approach foregrounded the socially constructed woman. Where previous ICA performances by women such as Carolee Schneeman’s *Naked Action Lecture* (1968) and Cozey Fanni Tutti’s works in COUM Transmission’s *Prostitution* (1976) draw attention to the female body as a literal subject in their nudity (which I will discuss in subsequent chapters), Ziranek ironically mimics the position occupied by women in the popular imagination – of kitchen sinks and chrysanthemums. Like other *About Time* artists, Ziranek poses a good example of what Luce Irigaray describes as exposing through ‘playful repetition what should have remained hidden’, as a tool for subversion.¹³⁷

Having considered these examples of *About Time* works, I note their continuing relevance and the prevalence of their subjects in contemporary feminist art and criticism. To give a further example, Roberta Graham’s tape- and slide-based piece *Short Cuts to Sharp Looks* examines the then-emerging trend for invasive cosmetic surgeries; she writes in the catalogue notes, ‘[t]he issues raised are not specifically concerned with the female image. It is an attempt to question how we evaluate the concept of “beauty” in our own particular culture’

¹³⁵ Silvia Ziranek proposal, *About Time*, TGA 955/7/7/66, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹³⁶ Januszczak, ‘A ghetto that holds half the world’s population’; by ‘husband’ Januszczak refers to Ziranek’s then-partner, the artist Richard Wilson who, seven years later, would see critical acclaim with his walk-in oil sculpture *20:50* (7-22 February 1987) at Matt’s Gallery. Two years later Wilson also went on to collaborate with Anne Bean in Bow Gamelan Ensemble.

¹³⁷ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, ‘Introduction’, in *The Power of Feminist Art*, pp. 10-31 (p. 25).

and possible relationships to ‘scarification and ethnic deformations, as alternative cosmetic treatments’.¹³⁸ Graham performed ‘little operations’ on photographs, peeling back the ‘skin’ where watermelon flesh and other textures would lie underneath, and projected images of herself and friends’ faces with their ‘imperfections’ highlighted, and then erased (which had the effect of ‘trying to make everyone the same’) – these are then contrasted with images of scarification and tattoo practices as a form of ‘body sculpture’.¹³⁹ Sonia Knox’s installation *Spring 1980* explores street harassment, as the catalogue relays a memory of walking past men waiting in the dole queue in Ireland: ‘She got used to seeing the young lads on street corners – the whistles, the jeers – she turned her head, plucked up her courage and walked by’.¹⁴⁰ Knox’s work touches on the wider themes of violence in society, particularly in the context of the Irish Troubles, but also resonates with popular feminist campaigns against gendered harassment today such as Hollaback! and Everyday Sexism.¹⁴¹ Others such as Judith Higginbottom’s *Water into Wine*, and Susan Hiller’s *10 months* focus on menstruation and women’s life cycles, which also continue to be the subject of new works and projects of emerging feminist artists and activists.

About Time clearly presents a significant event in the diversification of arts practices in London, particularly in the context of mainstream venues. Though their production processes span numerous fields, it is indicative that many of the artists exhibited are relatively overlooked in histories of art, women’s movements, film and video, and theatre. With the lack of press interest in these ‘third area’ practices, the importance of taking documentation into their own

¹³⁸ ‘Roberta Graham’, *About Time* exh. cat., p. 16.

¹³⁹ Graham’s interest in surgical imagery and ritual body-based practices was influenced by works of the Viennese Aktionists, Kenneth Anger, and Francis Bacon, as well as the burgeoning punk movement in the mid- and late-1970s. Roberta Graham, interview with the author, 26 July 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Sonia Knox, ‘*Spring 1980*’, in *About Time*, exh. cat., p. 20.

¹⁴¹ Hollaback! and The Everyday Sexism Project both offer online platforms for sharing experiences of street and gendered harassment: see <<http://www.ihollaback.org/>> and <<http://everydaysexism.com/>> [accessed 11 November 2015].

hands was understood by the artists involved, and they took care to review each other's work, such as in the case of the writings published in *P.S.* journal. As Elwes has said, 'there was no other solution for those of us in the *About Time* show but to review each other's performances, to write our own history. This is how I began writing about art – out of necessity.'¹⁴² Indeed, reviews of the live event are particularly important in their capacity to interrupt or complicate the neat, positivist historical narrative that may emerge from other sources. For instance, in her review of Carlyle Reedy's *Woman One*, of which there is scant archival record, Lynne MacRitchie writes about how audience members were unable to fit into the tiny performance space, and many watched from another room via a live video feed:

The sound was unfortunately rather unclear and many of Carlyle's words were lost. She decorated her face and examined it in the mirror, talking about time. Tracing its surface, with a graceful swoop she shaved an eye-brow clean away. Suddenly I had a flash of what it might have been like at a Dada event so long ago – intrigued, surprised – what could come next? An ironing board was 'improved' with a hand plane until it crashed to the floor. Tin cans rolled and Carlyle stamped on one with a firm strong foot, declaring 'This is miserable'. There was some percussion, some gamelan-like music, and lastly, seen in negative, the projected image of a baby's face, crying, open-mouthed, demanding.¹⁴³

Finally, MacRitchie relays the conclusion of the 'unusually powerful' event: '*The space* as Carlyle wrote on the screen in a final gesture, *is too crowded*.'¹⁴⁴ This account brings into focus Reedy's own self-reflexivity at the time of the event itself, commenting on the mess and potential 'failures' of the live event as significant components of feminist representation and

¹⁴² Elwes, 'A Parallel Universe', p. 107.

¹⁴³ Elwes, Garrard et al, 'About Time at the I.C.A', p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

interpretation, and related to the problematic or painful negotiations of gendered labour and everyday life. Here, issues of documentation and its implications for historical research are brought into sharp focus by the live elements of performance works and the marginality of women in the archive, which I will look at in further detail in my next chapter. Related to that, Elwes also cites the egalitarian methods of the women artists' committee, and the lack of an identifiable 'art personality' to attach the exhibition to, as one of many possible reasons for the relative obscurity of the works, as well as the failure of even feminist critics to describe the work at the time.¹⁴⁵ For instance, as Elwes has pointed out in recent discussions, Rozsika Parker's review of *About Time* fails to describe works and mentions only one of the artists (Sally Potter) by name.¹⁴⁶

While *About Time* and the 'women's season' brought women artists and new practices into a kind of institutional visibility in 1980, it is also worth pointing out that the selection comprises a specific, relatively narrow sample of work by women in some respects. For instance, in terms of the previously cited division between women who performed clothed and women who performed naked, *About Time* (consciously or unconsciously) seems to have succumbed to some extent to Kelly's refusal of the representation of women's bodies, and artists such as Cosey Fanni Tutti are notably absent. While organisers of the exhibition never directly claimed to be presenting a 'survey' of any kind, it is worth bearing in mind that some feminist strategies and practices were privileged over others. Furthermore, while seeking to resist the homogeneity of the mainstream art world, *About Time* (and the 'women's season' more broadly) did in fact reproduce some of its marginalising systems. It is difficult to verify precisely due to the lack of some of the artists' archival and historical visibility, but the selection

¹⁴⁵ Catherine Elwes, interview with the author, London, 25 July 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Catherine Elwes speaking at *Women's Images of Men Study Day*, Nottingham Contemporary Gallery, 18 March 2014. For Parker's original review, see Rozsika Parker, 'Feminist Art Practices in *Women's Images of Men, About Time* and *Issue*', in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985*, ed. by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 235-7.

is certainly vastly, if not entirely, composed of white artists; despite artists of colour such as Mona Hatoum applying to the open call and being turned down.¹⁴⁷ Contrastingly, video artist Tamara Krikorian (who was of Armenian heritage) had been invited to take part and help select *About Time*, but she declined with the explanation that ‘the more I consider the notion of Women’s art, I find it less and less satisfactory intellectually’, and that she was ‘extremely doubtful’ of the group show format.¹⁴⁸ Considering that artist Rasheed Araeen had criticised the women organisers of the previously cited *Hayward Annual* in 1978 for the lack of representation of artists of colour two years earlier, this failure is particularly pointed.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, it is also worth examining with a critical eye what is at stake in the ‘women’s season’ organisers’ attempt to enter and alter mainstream art establishments – and the extents to which they succeeded. As Griselda Pollock argued (after Lucy Lippard) in reference to the 1978 ‘women’s’ Hayward show, this type of intervention can subvert, but in some ways is also in danger of inadvertently falling in line with the prescribed directive ‘to get a larger slice of a rotten pie’.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, while engaging with and celebrating the histories of achievements of women artists who pioneered new performance forms over the course of this thesis, I also hope to retain a critical distance from the ICA as an institution and its archival representation at Tate, balancing what the institution offers as a means of accessing shrouded histories with an awareness of the institution’s own politics and patterns of bias. In this sense, it is crucial that after such developments as the ‘women’s season’, the sense of urgency of artists to continue to

¹⁴⁷ TGA 955/7/5/45, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London. Other notable rejections include Helen Chadwick (who had received a reasonable amount of critical attention by this stage), and Shirley Cameron, who wrote a letter to Nairne expressing dissatisfaction with the decision, but did in the end take part in Carlyle Reedy’s *Woman One*.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from, Tamara Krikorian to Sandy Nairne dated 8 January 1979, TGA 955/7/5/44, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁴⁹ John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 227.

¹⁵⁰ Lippard cited in Pollock, ‘Feminism, Femininity, and the Hayward Annual Exhibition 1978’, p. 37.

seek alternative spaces, methods, processes, and so on, outside of an unsatisfactory mainstream system should persist.

As I have explained, *About Time*'s publicity – as well as its title ('it's *about time* this happened') – suggests that the exhibition was an overdue and unprecedented event for art by women in the contemporary context. Indeed, it was a remarkable and important event in offering a public and highly visible platform for women, many of whom were emerging artists or virtually unknown, working in experimental time-based forms of video, performance and installation. However, as I will make clear over the course of this thesis, this narrative does not account for the histories of comparable works by women that had been taking place since at least the late-1960s, even within the ICA. Such a narrative puts us at risk of perpetuating the lack of education about, or historical-cultural awareness of, women artists in history. Bobby Baker has since reflected on this and has described the way in which, for her generation, (women) artists looked to women in the literary canon such as Virginia Woolf or Jane Austen for inspiration, due to the lack of readily available information or encouragement to study women working in visual arts.¹⁵¹ Questions of absences and notions of presence, or different ways of 'making visible' in work by women artists are emblematised by Rose Finn-Kelcey's *About Time* work, a performance titled *Mind the Gap*. In the work, as I will explain in the following chapter, Finn-Kelcey plays with her visible reluctance to appear before an audience or viewers, prompting enquiries into seemingly competing strategies of demanding visibility and performing tactical absences in feminist art. In the following chapter my research necessarily moves beyond the ICA as a venue and its archival representation in accounting for Finn-Kelcey's life and practice as an artist who, from the 1970s onwards, posed crucial questions for feminist representation and interpretation.

¹⁵¹ Bobby Baker speaking during a Coffee Table discussion, 'Early Days', hosted by Lois Weaver as part of Live Art Development Agency's *Restock Rethink Reflect 3: On Live Art and Feminism* initiative, 2 May 2014, Live Art Development Agency, London.

Chapter Two

Restless Images: The Feminist Performances of Rose Finn-Kelcey

In my attempt to ‘recover’ performance works by women, I have been continually faced with the inadequacy of the ICA archive, its evident patterns of patriarchal and capitalist bias, and its profound gaps. It has become increasingly clear to me as a feminist scholar that attending to the ‘gaps’ of history and archival representation is of paramount importance, but also comes with its own set of challenges and strategic problems. Questions of canonisation, and approaches to revisionist history (specifically, those which would seek to insert women into the established, still male-oriented canon) have been recognised as central questions for feminist histories of art and performance from their emergence as fields of scholarship. For example, as I explained in the previous chapter, in the early 1970s Linda Nochlin demonstrated the gendered constructions of greatness or accomplishment upon which admission into the art historical canon is traditionally predicated, and which work to render women and other artists relatively invisible, despite their presence.¹ Recognition of this makes *that* specific canon not only broadly unavailable to artists in the margins, but also, I argue, undesirable as an object of pursuit for feminists. Particularly, as critical attention in feminist and other self-reflexive historiographies of art and performance has since galvanized around questions of institutionalisation more broadly, and attendant effects of potential containment in the act of history-making. For example, drawing on the work of Adrian Heathfield, Dominic Johnson has recently reminded:

[As] a ‘modest archive’ of performance, any history must consider and attempt to unsettle its own ‘technique of repetition’, to produce archival records whose own achievements and limitations are scrutinised. An act of historical narration, [Heathfield]

¹ Linda Nochlin, ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’, *ARTnews*, 69 (1971), 22-39.

argues, should interrogate and resist, particularly, ‘the unfortunate consequences of the archival impulse’, which may include canonisation, political neutralisation, or other normalising effects of traditional scholarship.²

Such arguments demonstrate the ongoing relevance of historian Joan Wallach Scott’s well-known call ‘not only for a new history of women, but also a new history’ over 25 years ago, which includes an overhaul of historiographical assumptions in approaches to the past across fields of history.³ Hence, the feminist historical project is not simply one of bringing hitherto invisible, or marginal subjects into visibility by re/inserting them into the canon. Rather, our very understandings of visibility and invisibility, and absence and presence, which may initially appear in opposition, are brought forcefully into question.

I have explained in the previous chapter that the *About Time* exhibition (and the wider context of the ‘women’s season’) at the ICA constitutes an important event in that women artists working in the UK in ‘time-based’ forms of performance, video and installation, and collective feminist organising, gained unprecedented visibility and recognition in the mainstream spaces of the public gallery and wider media. However, we must also think critically about surrounding questions of institutional presence and absence; particularly, if we are to take into account Griselda Pollock and Lucy Lippard’s warnings that energies of feminist organising may be misdirected where they seek to win over the ‘rotten pie’ of patriarchal institutions.⁴ Expanding on the previous chapter’s discussion of *About Time*, I focus in this chapter on the work of one artist to stage work as part of the exhibition, Rose Finn-Kelcey – who died in 2014 while I was undertaking research for this thesis. Finn-Kelcey’s performance

² Dominic Johnson, ‘Introduction: Live Art in the UK’, in *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK*, ed. by Dominic Johnson (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 5-12 (p. 7).

³ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 29.

⁴ Lippard cited in Griselda Pollock, ‘Feminism, Femininity, and the Hayward Annual Exhibition 1978’, *Feminist Review*, 2 (1979), 33-55 (p. 37).

practice in the 1970s, and particularly *Mind the Gap*, which she performed as part of *About Time*, I argue, both prompts and enables an interrogation of questions visibility, absence and presence for feminist art and interpretation, which emerged through the 1970s and continue to hold resonance today. Addressing the absence and presence of her archival representation must be undertaken, then, with self-reflexive criticality in order not to simply reproduce existing – and inadequate – patterns of cultural and historical institutions, but to reorganise and reinvent approaches to such a task. In this chapter, one of the ways in which this takes place is by ensuring that my account of Finn-Kelcey's work is strategically expanded to extend beyond the limits of the ICA and the ICA archive.⁵ As such, this chapter builds to a close reading of the *Mind the Gap* (as a key performance at the ICA), but also departs from it to include a broader range of sources, works, and contexts, and attempts to provide an expanded context for and analysis of Finn-Kelcey's performance practice. This includes consideration of Finn-Kelcey's own monograph, which is comprehensive, but crucially falls short of giving any in-depth analysis or history of her performance works of the 1970s and 1980s.⁶

On the question of 'absence', historical approaches to performance works have frequently foregrounded narratives of loss, and point to the dislocation between the experience of the live event, and its spectral documentation or archival 'remains'. For instance, Peggy Phelan's enormously influential *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) makes a case for performance as productively resistant to representation (including archival representation), which always 'fails to reproduce the real exactly'.⁷ While Phelan emphasises a dialectical relationship between representation and real as interrelated and co-dependent, her theorisation is distinctly ordered around psychoanalytic (specifically Lacanian) notions of lack and

⁵ I was unsuccessful in obtaining a reply to a request for an interview with Finn-Kelcey in 2013; I was unaware that she was struggling with the onset of motor neurone disease at that time.

⁶ Rose Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey* (London: Ridinghouse, 2013).

⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

modalities of seeing as ‘self-seeing’, which is bound up with a ‘loss of not-being the other’, experienced via representation.⁸ Following on from Michel Foucault, Phelan argues that visibility in itself can be ‘a trap’ of social reproduction; she explains, ‘[t]here is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal.’⁹ In *Unmarked*, she proposes instead an ‘active vanishing, a deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility’, which reiterates earlier feminist strategies of withdrawal from patriarchal and mainstream institutions, clogging the ‘smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital’.¹⁰ Again, what Phelan’s argument suggests is that gaining, maintaining and understanding presence *and* visibility is a complex feminist project, which may at the same time work towards strategic absence and *unavailability*.

Jen Harvie has since articulated this ‘double movement’ more explicitly, shedding further light on the issue by returning to the problematics of the ‘authentic’ and present body.¹¹ As I noted in Chapter One, Catherine Elwes argued that a major reason for feminist artists turning to performance in the 1970s was that it ‘[offered] women a unique vehicle for making that direct unmediated address’.¹² While this statement affirms the importance of feminist attempts to articulate agency and subjectivity in the historical context, the failures to acknowledge performance as *representation* might lead artists to fall into dangerous essentialist assumptions about ‘female’ identity and experience. For example, as Harvie notes, the ‘unmediated’ and ‘authentic’ body in performance might produce the effect of ‘apparently

⁸ Ibid., p. 13. Phelan particularly foregrounds Jacques Lacan’s notion of lack as signifier of the ‘Other’, defined by a lack of phallus. This is also key in Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze, where – again – women do not ‘have’ the phallus, they are seen as ‘being’ the phallus. See Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6-18.

⁹ Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 19, 148.

¹¹ Jen Harvie, ‘Being Her: Presence, Absence and Performance in the Art of Janet Cardiff and Tracey Emin’, in *Auto/Biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 195-216.

¹² Catherine Elwes, ‘Floating Femininity: A Look At Performance Art by Women’, in *Women’s Images of Men*, ed. by Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Morreau (1985 rpt. London: Pandora Press, 1990), pp. 164-193 (p. 164).

universal, timeless and unchanging characteristics – like being more sensual than rational and being nature to man’s culture’.¹³ Harvie adds that these characteristics are ‘difficult for the projects of feminism to interrogate and, so to change’.¹⁴ In her discussion of the seemingly disembodied audio and installation-based works of Janet Cardiff and Tracey Emin, Harvie suggests a model of interpretation which takes into account dynamic and overlapping modes of presence and absence:

By exploring the female artists’ presence, the work affirms female identity and explores women’s subjective experiences, of intimacy and memory in particular; challenges the boundaries that delimit women’s spatial and institutional mobility; and affirms experience as sensual and material, not only visual but also aural, spatial, tactile and olfactory. Simultaneously emphasising the female artists’ absence, the work resists objectifying and commodifying its female artists and problematizes an understanding of the body in particular as the origin of female identity. The work’s first double movement between subjective presence and absence – between the artists’ dichotomous self-articulation as ‘me’ and ‘her’ – thus articulates and explores the poststructuralist problematics of being a woman.¹⁵

Moving away from notions of presence as bound up with the literal presence of the physical body, Harvie explores shifting, subjective presence in seemingly ‘non-live’ or inanimate objects, which coactively exists with strategic absence. Particularly, through materialist consideration of the works, she argues that these absences problematise gendered assumptions both of the ‘availability’ of women and the ‘knowability’ or presumed universality of their experience. However, while Harvie explored work where the artist’s body was not physically present, I

¹³ Harvie, ‘Being Her’, p. 194.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6.

argue that this complex, double movement between absence and presence is also key to understanding Finn-Kelcey's performance practices. Drawing again, as in Chapter One, on Amelia Jones' 'queer feminist durationality',¹⁶ I challenge potentially limiting precepts of anti-essentialist discourse by exploring ways in which Finn-Kelcey's performance works of the 1970s troubled (and were troubled by) notions of absence and presence, as well as the 'authentic' self by – to borrow Harvie's phrase – creating 'dichotomous self-articulation as "me" and "her"'.¹⁷

I aim to reopen territory for transgenerational engagement, while also acknowledging changing historical contexts of feminisms in their difference and specificities. To return to her book *Seeing Differently* (2012), Jones argues for a rethinking of '1970s' notions of identity revolving around binary structures (for instance, of the 'self' and 'other', or the 'master' and 'slave'), and proposes a 'new model for understanding identification as a reciprocal, dynamic, and ongoing process that occurs among viewers, bodies, images, and other visual modes of the (re)presentation of subjects'.¹⁸ Jones, following on from Teresa de Lauretis and other feminist thinkers, particularly from the 1980s, presses for a continual process of reflecting and rethinking how we self-define our feminisms, as past and present models of feminist representation and critique collide, in resistance to an otherwise certain position of impasse.¹⁹ As de Lauretis points out, the never-far away threat of allowing ourselves to settle into a passive and static feminism would see us unwittingly subsumed into the very institutions which (at the very least, latently) constitute and preserve patriarchal cultures.²⁰ This call for consciousness and self-criticism with regard to feminist issues is as urgent – if not more urgent – today, when our public spaces and social, cultural, and political institutions are now more, though, never fully,

¹⁶ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 6, 173-8.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 1.

¹⁹ Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms, and Contexts', in *Feminist Studies / Critical Studies*, ed. by Teresa de Lauretis (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 1-19 (p. 2).

²⁰ De Lauretis, 'Feminist Studies/Critical Studies', p. 7.

representative of women (particularly white, cisgender women). We are at risk of sliding towards a half-believing notion of ‘success’, particularly in the aftermath of variously defined ‘post-feminist’ discourses that nominally suggest that we are living and working in a post-patriarchal society.²¹

Indeed, it can be lauded as a triumph of the feminist art movement that Finn-Kelcey’s photographic work, *The Restless Image – A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position* (ca. 1975), can now be seen hanging on the walls of Tate Britain, a major, publically-funded gallery, curated directly alongside Order of Merit recipient Lucian Freud, and Royal Academician Anish Kapoor, as representative of British Art.²² Finn-Kelcey was born in Northampton on 4 March 1945, and died of motor neurone disease 13 February 2014.²³ She studied at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design and later Chelsea College of Art, and lived in London from 1968, working as an artist and teaching. One of the first formal showings of Finn-Kelcey’s work was in an exhibition of Post-Diploma Chelsea graduates at the University of Sussex’s gallery space in May 1968,²⁴ and she subsequently pioneered new art forms, such as performance and installation, as well artist-led feminist activism. Finn-Kelcey was a member of the Women Artists Collective [WAC], and a founder member of the Women Artists Slide

²¹ McRobbie details histories and characteristics of ‘post-feminism’ in Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009). I do not intend to argue that diverse schools of practice labelled as ‘post-feminist’ are the sole harbingers of complacency with regard to the continued predominance of patriarchal patterns of power. Indeed, activists who are very visible in their promotion of feminist viewpoints present a greater danger in covertly reinforcing specific prejudices of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. For example, as is the case in the London Feminist Network’s ongoing negation of transgender women and non-binary gender identities by having supported transgender exclusionary events in the past and failing to issue an inclusivity policy.

²² *BP Walk Through British Art* [Room: ‘1970 and 1980’] (Tate Britain, London, 14 May 2013-). Tate and the recent book on Finn-Kelcey’s work both date *The Restless Image* as made in 1975; see Rose Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, p. 204. However, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey archival documents from the time give the date as 1976; see, Rose Finn-Kelcey, ‘The Bird – Four Declensions 1971-77’, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. In summer 2014 I assisted The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey in creating an inventory of the artist’s personal archive. Subsequent citations are from this source unless stated otherwise.

²³ Guy Brett, ‘Rose Finn-Kelcey obituary’, *Guardian*, 24 February 2014
<<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/feb/24/rose-finn-kelcey>> [accessed 9 September 2014].

²⁴ *Sixteen – Works by Post Diploma Painters from Chelsea School of Art* (Arts Centre, University of Sussex, 28 May – 15 June 1968).

Library, which later evolved into the Women's Art Library, now held at Goldsmith's, University of London.²⁵ Her respect and appreciation of the work of her peers drove a desire to self-organise, curate and exhibit works of other artists including Carlyle Reedy, Susan Hiller, and Tina Keane.²⁶

While a general overview of the artist's practice over a lifetime is made difficult in that Finn-Kelcey worked with very diverse materials and forms including sculpture, flag-making, photography, live performance, sound, installation, and paper cut-outs, it is possible to follow shared thematic threads and meticulous working processes. Perhaps at the heart of Finn-Kelcey's practice is what Guy Brett refers to in relation to her early work as processes of 'interactivity and change'.²⁷ Flags, which Finn-Kelcey also termed 'wind-dependent objects', are sculpted by their interaction with uncontrollable variables of the environment and the position of spectators, both in terms of form and their performative messages.²⁸ For instance, as Brett points out, *Here is a Gale Warning* (1971), a flag which bears its title, 'would not function as a warning unless there was already a wind', or indeed unless the viewer happened to catch sight of the object in the London skyline, flying above Alexandra Palace.²⁹ This aspect of the chance encounter functions similarly in an earlier work from September 1970, for which Finn-Kelcey organised her own solo show, *24 Wind-Dependent Objects*, by placing a series of windsocks alongside a railway line between Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamstead, to be seen by train

²⁵ The Women Artists' Collective grew out of the Women's Workshop of the Artists Union (established 1972); a brief history can be found in the exhibition pamphlet for, *Hang Up Put Down, Stand Up* (Art Meeting Place, Covent Garden, 15-21 July, 1974). A brief account of the Women Artists' Slide Collective and other feminist groups can be found in Batista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 58 (footnote, p. 174). Finn-Kelcey's role in the collectives was detailed to me in conversations with fellow members Sonia Knox (in interview, 26 June 2014) and Hannah O'Shea (via email, 13 August 2014).

²⁶ '4 artists to set up a permanent exhibition in the gallery' [ca. 1973-1975], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

²⁷ Guy Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (London: Ridinghouse, 2013), pp. 9-170 (p. 24).

²⁸ For early usage of the term 'wind-dependent objects' see 'September 1970 - exhibition of 24 wind-dependent objects', The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

²⁹ Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 24.

commuters and not the ‘select minority of art gallery visitors’.³⁰ In Finn-Kelcey’s later work, this openness to chance, change and participation continued in pieces such as *A Shot in the Locker* (2000), where visitors who place coins in a donation box at a disused church in Mexico City unexpectedly fill the building’s chambers and high domes with the amplified echoes of coins rolling and falling downwards. Later, in *Angel* (2004), a glittering facade of bright yellow, red and silver shimmer discs reveal an SMS-style ‘angel’ emoticon to passers-by on the side of St. Paul’s church at Bow Common. Even Finn-Kelcey’s later paper cut-out works, such as *Rip-Roaring Harum Scarum* (2010), recall the interplays of absence, presence and participation of her earlier works in their interactions of positive and negative space.

Though Finn-Kelcey greatly contributed to the seismic shift in the mainstream cultural landscape commanded by emerging feminist and egalitarian practices in the late 1960s and 1970s, during her lifetime she received virtually no visibility in the major institutions of art in London, where she lived and worked.³¹ In *The Restless Image*, we see a monochrome self-portrait of the young artist posing in a handstand on the starkly bare Greatstone beach at low tide. Finn-Kelcey’s face has been obscured by the hem of her full-length pleated silver skirt, which falls up (or rather down), billowing across her torso (Fig. 3). Her slim legs, clad in pale tights and platform espadrilles, emerge from the folds of the fabric as they are thrown skywards in abandon, glowing luminously in the light of the sun. A long shadow is cast on the sand and a tiny outline of a figure can be seen at the shoreline in the far distance, further foregrounding the body of a woman captured in a moment of both personal liberation and protest.

³⁰ Finn-Kelcey attempted to make a film of this project following ‘failures’ including thefts and disappearances of the windsocks; ‘September 1970 – exhibition of 24 wind-dependent objects’, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. See also, Sue Braden, ‘Sky Signs’, *Art and Artists*, 7.1 (April 1972), 28-30.

³¹ I also point this out in the Wikipedia page that I created for Finn-Kelcey during a Wikipedia ‘edit-a-thon’ at the Live Art Development Agency, 25 April 2014; see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Finn-Kelcey> [accessed 1 September 2014]. For more information on the ‘edit-a-thon’ as one possible means of historicising feminist performance, see Eleanor Roberts and Lois Weaver, ‘Editing Ourselves into History: A Live Art and Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon’, *Interventions*, *Contemporary Theatre Review* [online], 25:1 (2015) <<http://www.contemporarytheatrereview.org/2015/editing-ourselves-into-history/>> [published 1 February 2015].

In addressing the discrepancy between ‘seen’ and ‘felt’ positions, the title clearly situates the work within feminist discourses focussed on women as ‘seen’ objects in search of subjecthood; yet the image itself, slickly printed in a new larger-scale format, would perhaps also be presented fairly comfortably today alongside particularly stylish advertising, or fashion marketing photography. Her peer Catherine Elwes recently voiced her concern that the changing political and institutional contexts in which we view the work of Finn-Kelcey and her contemporaries may heighten the risk of images being (mis)interpreted as more decorative than political.³² Without an understanding of, or engagement with, the social, cultural, political, and historical context, which the work is both informed by and also intervenes into, *The Restless Image* can be ‘recuperated’ more readily by conservative capitalist culture, and possible readings of the work as sartorially inspired iconography of a celebrated (neo)liberal ‘femininity’. In this instance, the icon of a young woman who appears adventurous, fashionable and individualised – qualities identified by Angela McRobbie as post-feminist – might bring her into a kind of ‘visibility’, but one that may be limited to, and complicit with, a pacifying consumer culture which reinforces ‘feminine’ normativity under the illusion of personal ‘freedom’.³³ Writing in the late 2000s, in her book *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, McRobbie persuasively identifies patterns of the ‘cultural space’ of post-feminism, particularly in or related to popular and mainstream political contexts. This includes the commercial mainstreaming of feminist (along with gay, anti-racist, and other) identity politics and imagery as positive while, simultaneously, a covert repudiation of earlier iterations of those movements takes place, with the suggestion that they are no longer relevant.³⁴ Read within or alongside this framework, *The Restless Image* might also be situated as a ‘text of enjoyment’ within the wider context of dominant modes of ‘undisturbed’ nostalgia in

³² Catherine Elwes, interview with the author, 25 July 2013, London.

³³ McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, p. 1.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 15, 87, 155.

commercial imagery.³⁵ So, it would be a mistake to regard Finn-Kelcey's current inclusion in Tate Britain's rehang of British art in itself as a kind of 'victory' that redresses the historical invisibility of women artists in public space, as proof – as an article in the *Financial Times* has suggested – that feminism and other localised egalitarian practices have been 'embraced' by the institution.³⁶

How might we, in present-time, retain and sustain the radical potential enacted by women performing in history?³⁷ This crucial and enduring question for feminist criticism drives my desire to historicise Finn-Kelcey's feminist art, not simply as a means of representing or merely commemorating her work, but as a way of recognising, re-evaluating, and reworking the political, theoretical and aesthetic possibilities it presents. In drawing on the model of criticism proposed by Jones, which seeks to trouble and ultimately displace binary notions of identity, subjects situated at the 'margins' are imbued with agency, and understood as irreducible in their complexity. As Finn-Kelcey oscillates here between the 'centre' and the 'margin', definitions of those as fixed, mutually exclusive locations become unstable, even as positions of difference are simultaneously asserted.

Rooting an examination of the work in contemporary discourses and feminist paradigms of the 1970s and 1980s, from which Finn-Kelcey's performance practice emerges, aids the necessary understanding of the historical context, but also serves the crucial political impetus, recently reaffirmed by Pollock, of working towards transgenerational discourses and understandings, as I have said.³⁸ Here I also rearticulate a position put forward by Judith M.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 21, 30.

³⁶ Jackie Wullschlager, 'Tate Britain's Rehang', *Financial Times*, 17 May 2013 <<http://on.ft.com/107MSXn>> [accessed 2 September 2014].

³⁷ I thank Jen Harvie for asking a similar question in response to my paper 'Power Play: Charlotte Moorman at the Institute of Contemporary Arts', Colloquium, Queen Mary, University of London Department of Drama, 6 June 2014.

³⁸ Griselda Pollock in conversation with Lynne Segal and Sonia Boyce, 'Radical Thinkers: the art, sex and politics of feminism', Tate Modern, 9 February 2015.

Bennett in *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* in arguing that identifying continuities across time, not only of historical conditions and the systematic marginalisation of women, as Bennett suggests, but also of the creative resistance practices formed by women and their transgenerational resonances, strengthens the political potency of feminist inflected arts and history-making, and troubles hegemonic ‘master narratives’.³⁹ Similarly, Elizabeth Freeman’s theory of ‘temporal drag’ as a generative process which works to ‘complicate the idea of horizontal political generations succeeding one another’, by focussing instead on the ‘crossing of time, less in the mode of postmodern pastiche than in the mode of stubborn identification with a set of social coordinates that exceeded [our] own historical moment’ is also important here.⁴⁰ Freeman’s theory arises firstly from temporal overlaps between lesbian (seemingly older) and queer (seemingly newer) subjects, identifications, and representational modes, but it also offers a good model for rethinking generational feminist politics more broadly, away from the idea of succession and displacement, and towards the idea of generative dialogue between past and present. Given the complex ways in which forces of institutionalisation clash with the feminist project of formulating positions of resistance to patriarchal institutions, some of which I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, I also suggest here the possibility of an institutional drag at play in my argument. While privileging configurations of relational non-normativity, marginality, subalternity (and its reinscription, as outlined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak),⁴¹ or even the cultural ‘new’ (if only in seeking to disrupt those positions) as feminist strategies or potential subjects, I also acknowledge the

³⁹ Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 28, 129.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Freeman, ‘Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations’, *New Literary History*, 31.4 (Autumn 2000), 727-44 (pp. 728, 729).

⁴¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography [1985]’, in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (Routledge: London, 1996), pp. 203-236 (p. 217).

‘double movement’ (to borrow Harvie’s term again) of seeking out feminist histories via institutions and their archives.

As I note in the introduction to this thesis, a portion of this research stems from primary research in the artist’s personal archive, which was in the process of being catalogued in summer 2014 following Finn-Kelcey’s death. The important materials found there are contextualised alongside resources including clippings, publicity, and proposals housed in other London-based archives: the ICA archive held at Tate; the British Artists’ Film and Video Study Collection (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London); ACME archive; and the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum). Conversations and interviews with friends and peers including artists Catherine Elwes, Sonia Knox and Anne Bean also contribute to my understanding of Finn-Kelcey’s practice, as they perceived it through time. This primary research is a central component in my attempt to build upon existing publications on Finn-Kelcey and her work, which – apart from reviews and brief notes – mainly consist of the artist’s own monograph, two chapters by Guy Brett, and an interview and scholarly article and interview by Lisa Tickner, published in *Oxford Art Journal* 35 years ago.⁴² An interview with Hermione Wiltshire, and shorter studies by Jennifer Walwin and Catherine Elwes are also notable research resources.⁴³ While the self-archived materials, in their seeming proximity to the artist and her ‘intentions’ as we may imagine them, give clues to important questions of material conditions, factors of influence and so on, it must be noted that my use of Finn-Kelcey’s archive is necessarily ‘unauthorised’.

⁴² Guy Brett, ‘Here, Now and Beyond’, in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, pp. 9-170; Guy Brett, ‘Vacating the Premises: Rose Finn-Kelcey’, in *Carnival of Perception: Selected Writings on Art* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2004), pp. 207-19; Lisa Tickner, ‘One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth: The Performance Work of Rose Finn-Kelcey’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 3.1 (April 1980), 58-72 (p. 66).

⁴³ Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire*, London 3 September 1997 (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1997); Jennifer Walwin, ‘Rose Finn-Kelcey’, in *The British Show*, exh. cat., ed. by William Wright and Anthony Bond (Art Gallery of New South Wales: Sydney, 1985), pp. 135-138; Catherine Elwes, ‘In Praise of Older Women’, *MAKE*, 78 (December 1997 - February 1998), 17-19 (p. 17).

This research, of course, does not and should not make a claim to ventriloquise Finn-Kelcey's own voice, nor should I as a researcher overestimate my insight into factors of production or intent with the privilege of accessing the archive. Rather, in the spirit of transgenerational discourse I rearticulate the documents, suggest my own narratives, and make visible the moment of reception as my own. In this respect, the work follows on from Jones in her insistence that the relationship between bodies in the moment of performance and their performance documentation-as-representation 'most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centered modernist subject and thus most dramatically provides a radical challenge to the masculinism, racism, colonialism, classicism, and heterosexism built into this fantasy'.⁴⁴ Here, the lack of fixity of performance and its representation poses an important set of problems to be negotiated (the 'who', 'what', 'where' and so on), but it is also precisely where the transformative, political possibility of the form and its scholarship lies. In what follows I focus on two performance works, *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* (1976) which emerged out of Finn-Kelcey's desire to find a new artistic language suitable for her experience as a 'woman artist', and *Mind the Gap* (1980), part of *About Time*, which represented a crisis of sorts for Finn-Kelcey in her engagement with live performance.

Finn-Kelcey's turn to performance as an artistic form emerges dialogically alongside her other works and activism in feminist organising. To return to *The Restless Image*, notes and drawings in the artist's archive suggest that Finn-Kelcey may have originally conceived of the work as a performance for a shop window display, possibly to be seen by the audience through the glass via small peep-holes or gaps. Concurrently, Finn-Kelcey was organising weekly mixed-gender seminars on women's art, discussing the merits of parallel women-only spaces for art and education, and investigating how a specifically 'woman artist' based practice might be

⁴⁴ Amelia Jones, "Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal*, 56.4 (Winter 1997), 11-8 (p. 12).

developed. Finn-Kelcey made notes on theories of gender and feminist interpretation then in circulation, which interweave with notes and ideas from her own conversations. For instance, like Rose Garrard, Finn-Kelcey was interested in the notion popularised by John Berger that suggested women do not simply act as men supposedly do, but that they simultaneously ‘watch themselves being looked at’.⁴⁵ Finn-Kelcey also made notes on pioneering radical feminisms emerging from the US, such as Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case For Feminist Revolution* (1970);⁴⁶ particularly, concluding one set of notes, Finn-Kelcey typed out Firestone’s incitement to total cultural revolution: ‘It would take a denial of all cultural tradition for women to produce [...] a true “female” art.’⁴⁷ A series of notes filed and kept in her personal archive show how Finn-Kelcey grappled with questions of how art might dismantle or disrupt these static roles of ‘women’ and ‘men’, comparable to designated professions of capitalist patriarchy, which isolate, silence, and reduce people to their assumed functionality.⁴⁸

Particularly significant is the repeated emergence in her notes of the category or misnomer of the ‘woman artist’. Like many of her peers, in specific situations in the 1970s Finn-Kelcey self-identified with the term ‘woman artist’, which was and continues to be a contested category in its usefulness for artists who are also women. As Carol Armstrong has noted, its historical construction as actively antithetical to the male-defined canon comes with an undesirable ‘epic perspective’ of totality, and potentially subjective fixity.⁴⁹ In an immediately evident sense, the term also reinforces a kind of marginality by positioning women outside of, or other than, recognition as being – like men – simply *artists*. Similarly, in theatrical contexts

⁴⁵ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972 rpt., London: Penguin, 1992), p. 41.

⁴⁶ Firestone quoted by Rose Finn-Kelcey, untitled and undated note [in folder containing notes on works 1971-77], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁴⁷ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case For Feminist Revolution* (1970 rpt. London and New York: Verso, 2015), p. 143.

⁴⁸ Rose Finn-Kelcey, untitled and undated note [in folder containing notes on works 1971-77], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁴⁹ Carol Armstrong, ‘Preface’, in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. by Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (London: MIT Press, 2006), pp. ix – xiv (pp. ix – x).

the often patronising and marginalising effects of the term ‘actress’ have been acknowledged. These gendered categorisations, when considered as assumed marginal counterparts to male centrality or neutrality, may also serve to reinforce notions of essentialist ‘female’ identity. However, as I am drawn – as I have said – to Freeman’s ‘temporal drag’,⁵⁰ and to Jones’ ‘queer feminist durationality’,⁵¹ I also argue that to rethink the term as historically specific, and to open up a space of encounter across feminist temporalities, is also useful. I follow on from many other historical and critical feminist projects of the last two decades here in, as Catherine de Zegher summarised in the mid-2000s, rearticulating ‘feminine’ subjectivities and active, potentially destabilising representational strategies, while creating distance away from biological determinates.⁵²

It is crucial, then, to situate the term and its usage in historical contexts, and understand the milieu of criticism and practice it signifies. In the case of Women Artists Collective, of which Finn-Kelcey was a part, ‘women artists’ signalled a collectivity and collective demand that an art world dominated by men engages with women, their experiences, and their representations of those experiences, as formatively part of their art practice and its value and validity. Possibilities and confines of the concept of the ‘woman artist’ emerge in equal measure in Finn-Kelcey’s notes, alongside the repeated call that such constructed categories be dialogically related to the social realities of women’s lives. As I have said, many have rightly pointed to the limits and limitations of the category of woman artist, or indeed of ‘woman’ altogether; for instance, French writer and theorist Monique Wittig argues for the abolition of the singular ‘woman’ myth as a political and ideological formation which negates women and

⁵⁰ Freeman, ‘Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations’, p. 728.

⁵¹ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, pp. 6, 173-8.

⁵² Catherine de Zegher, ‘Introduction’, in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, pp. xv-xx.

their social realities.⁵³ In Finn-Kelcey's case, however, identification with 'woman artist' in the 1970s seems to point to a process of collective identity formation revolving around a position of opposition to masculine hegemony, based on the desire to move closer to a dialogic relationship between artistic representation and practice by women, and the lived experiences of women as hitherto marginalised subjects. In other words, rather than signifying only a static, singularised identity of an implicitly marginal woman-who-is-an-artist, the term might also stand for an anti-category: a dynamic process of collective intervention and renegotiation from a necessarily shifting position of reclaimed and declaimed difference. As Linda Nochlin has pointed out, the self-defined 'woman artist' had in the 1970s, and perhaps continues to hold the potential for, a rupturing effect, which, for Nochlin, is also bound up with the 'newness' and 'transgressivity' of the feminine as a taken, constructed and elastic position.⁵⁴

Though aesthetically dissimilar, Finn-Kelcey's presentation in *The Restless Image* of an inverted body in a handstand recalls the Rabelaisian grotesque, as the head is thrown under, top to bottom; a transforming subject, vacated by precedent, the unruly body reveals a vacuum and invites possibility. In the face of an art historical precedent of white male hegemony, Finn-Kelcey's desire to invent and create space for art forms which speak of, to, and for otherwise marginalised experiences and subjects presents a crucial political challenge to a field of representation where dominant images of women are appropriated, represented and reproduced by men. A similar impetus can be seen in the feminist *écriture féminine* of Hélène Cixous and Marguerite Duras, who in different ways demand and construct literary representations more attuned to their desires and experiences in giving voice, as Cixous writes, to 'the body without a frame, without skin, without walls, the flesh that doesn't dry, doesn't

⁵³ Monique Wittig, 'One is Not Born a Woman [1981]', in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 9-20 (pp. 15-16).

⁵⁴ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Thirty Years After', in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, pp. 21-34 (p. 59).

stiffen, doesn't clot the wild blood that wants to stream through it – forever'.⁵⁵ The volatility of the body that refuses to be contained, like the Rabelaisian grotesque, is extended through the practice of writing-the-self as 'blurry, several, simultaneous, impure'.⁵⁶ For Duras, this process takes place in the rejection of men's 'theoretical rattle' in favour of expanding on creative practices, and focussing attention on the visceral experiences of everyday struggle.⁵⁷ In *The Restless Image* the disjuncture between the 'seen' and 'felt' positions represented in the title are interminably muddled and the art work offers no 'resolution' between categories of the seen 'public' and the felt 'private', which flow into and between one another.

The Restless Image was developed separately from Finn-Kelcey's initial idea for a performance, and was reworked via a series of study photographs of handstands shot in a studio. The performance for the shop (or gallery) window came to fruition as *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* (1976), on 26 and 27 September 1976, made as part of *London Calling 1976 Festival* at the Acme Gallery in Covent Garden, London.⁵⁸ As Sally Potter told fellow artist Marc Chaimowicz in an interview for *Studio International* in 1976, performance, as a relatively uncharted terrain and 'anti-specialist area', enabled women in the UK to assert their status as makers of art and enter the institutional art world while also challenging and redefining it.⁵⁹ Prerequisite in this journey is the necessary process of women claiming agency of their bodies and practice, and troubling patriarchal objectification by becoming their own subjects. As Pollock has argued, this is achieved in instances and representations where women can be seen

⁵⁵ Hélène Cixous, 'Coming to Writing', in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. by Deborah Jenson, trans. by Sarah Cornell et al (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 1-58 (p. 10).

⁵⁶ Cixous, 'Coming to Writing', p. 29.

⁵⁷ Marguerite Duras, 'Smothered Creativity', trans. by Virginia Hules in *New French Feminisms*, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 111-13 (p. 111).

⁵⁸ The festival (14-27 September 1976) was organised by the groups Artists for Democracy, Art Meeting Place, London Musicians Collective, The Art Room, and Tone Place; co-ordinated by David Sharkey, they approached Acme Gallery (1976-1981) for use of their space. *London Calling*, pamphlet, Acme Studio archives, Mile End, London [cataloguing is in process at the time of writing].

⁵⁹ Sally Potter interviewed by Marc Chaimowicz, 'Women and Performance in the UK', *Studio International*, 192.982 (July/August 1976), 33-35 (p. 33).

to be actively looking and doing, which divert the objectifying, pacifying force of the gaze as the woman ‘figures as the subject of her own look’.⁶⁰ This line of enquiry refers to the content and form of women’s work, but also to the means of production, which holds particularly interesting implications for performance as a ‘permissive’ site of subjectivity, and consciousness-raising, or potentially ‘woman-only’ space. In the germinating years of collective feminist arts practice of the UK in the 1970s, women artists in London were also turning to discussion workshops, ‘rehearsal’ and performance as a means of collective identity-formation, for which there were antecedent examples; for instance, in the US civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, as Susan Leigh Foster has argued, while politics of resistance have frequently been historicised around an assumed dichotomy between symbolic action and physical intervention, deeper analysis of what she terms the ‘choreographies of protest’ reveals the body as an ‘articulate signifying agent’, and focus of cultural practice and discipline shared between art and activism.⁶¹ To offer another example of the overlapping relationships between art and activism in feminist practice of the early 1970s, Judy Chicago, along with Miriam Schapiro and the women engaged in her Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts, constructed the *Womanhouse* project, ‘playing around’ with performance as a personal and political consciousness-raising practice; as Chicago puts it, ‘to test out my desires’ and express ‘those aspects of myself that I didn’t see how to bring into my art’.⁶²

While Chicago’s recollection positions performance as ancillary to her painting and installation, for Finn-Kelcey performance was central to her practice in the mid-1970s – intervening, as Lisa Tickner puts it in *Oxford Art Journal*, into a ‘subversive’ anti-establishment and anti-discipline live art tradition, of which, Tickner argues (following on from Rose Lee

⁶⁰ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 76.

⁶¹ Susan Leigh Foster, ‘Choreographies of Protest’, *Theatre Journal*, 55.3 (2003), 395-412 (pp. 395-6).

⁶² Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (rpt. 1975, London: The Women’s Press, London, 1982) pp. 117-8.

Goldberg), modernist avant-gardes such as Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Happenings and Aktionism are a defining part.⁶³ Consciously situating Finn-Kelcey within a recognised art historical canon, Tickner also positions her work in productive contrast to approaches to performance dominated by men, particularly those of the Vienna Aktionist Hermann Nitsch and UK performance artist Stuart Brisley, and associated discourses of catharsis, pain, endurance, and singularity.⁶⁴ Whilst I query Tickner's (and Goldberg's) too-neat art historical narrative of performance, and the self-acknowledged 'opacity' of her psychoanalytical approach to Finn-Kelcey's performance practice at the time,⁶⁵ her suggestion of a critical and subversive, but also knotty and troubled feminine strategy is useful.

That Finn-Kelcey kept pages of notes from WAC meetings alongside her plans for art works reaffirms those ostensibly separate practices as linked on a spectrum of consciousness-raising. Her advocacy for the development of separate spaces for women in opposition to patriarchal dominance, which admittedly reinforce gender binaries (as well as binaries of 'self' and 'other'), functions here as a necessary precursor to achieving the ultimate goal of dismantling those binaries altogether. More specifically, in order to reshape how 'women' act and are defined in society, working towards understanding and sharing representations of women's 'identities' (both 'given' and self-defined) must take place. For Finn-Kelcey, through performances of the self, of which gender plays a part, there is perhaps 'consciousness-raising', but also a space in which to exert transformative desires and wills of the imagination. In *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, this is expressed most cogently in her interaction with two live magpies, which she called her alter ego sisters.⁶⁶ In the performance, Finn-Kelcey interacts with

⁶³ Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 60.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 60-1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

⁶⁶ Documents in Finn-Kelcey's archive suggest the birds may have been acquired or borrowed from Jean Rubenis' 'Bird Corner' Wild Bird Hospital project in Berkshire. One or both of the birds were also said to have been 'arrested' for stealing babies' rattles on a previous occasion; see Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 10.

the birds inside the Acme Gallery window, as female ‘species’ on display amongst tree branches arranged on the floor (Fig. 4). Separated by the glass, sound is relayed via an amplifier to the ever-changing audience in the street outside, looking in as Finn-Kelcey performs a repertoire of movements; attempting to move closer, she offers objects and food to the birds, and gauges her response based on their acceptance or rejection of the item. Finn-Kelcey magnifies her position as a cultural performer, placing both herself and the birds in a zoological position of display in the glass cage. There is an emphasis on the distinction between spaces demarcated as ‘public’ (the street) and ‘private’ (inside), but, as with *The Restless Image*, a simultaneous collapsing of those categories with the interactions of an invited voyeurism through the glass. Finn-Kelcey wrote that ‘the birds mirror much of my own behaviour’, identifying with their position in folk history as both marvelled and despised, and their hazardous attraction to, and hoarding of, material, glittering objects.⁶⁷ A later review by John Sharkey described the ‘metaphysical wonder’ and ‘poetic density’ of this quiet, almost delicate performance of ‘the majestic birds and the forlorn girl attempting to communicate with them’.⁶⁸ These qualities (implicitly registered by Sharkey as ‘feminine’) seem particularly striking when considered in comparison to Joseph Beuys’ earlier work *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (René Block Gallery, New York, 23–25 May 1974). For extended periods lasting over three days, and wanting to see nothing else of America on his brief visit from Germany, Beuys caged himself in a gallery with a live, isolated coyote as symbolically representative, Tisdall argues, of hunted and suppressed indigenous Native American cultures.⁶⁹ Food, water, hay and copies of the *Wall Street Journal* for the animal to defecate on were provided, and Beuys periodically sounded a triangle hanging from his neck, which prompted recorded sounds of a turbine.⁷⁰ While an examination of the documentation shows the animal to be largely passive, even uninterested,

⁶⁷ Rose Finn-Kelcey, ‘Notes on a performance One for Sorrow, Two for Joy’, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁶⁸ John Sharkey, ‘Performance Art in Britain’, *Flash Art*, 94-95 (January/February 1980), 46-49 (p. 48).

⁶⁹ Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008), p. 11.

⁷⁰ Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote*, pp. 6, 15.

the most well-known images of his performance show Beuys wrapped in protective felt, which is tearing away from him as the coyote rips at it with snarling teeth.⁷¹ Compared to Beuys's stunt, which was clearly coded as a risky, somewhat 'macho', stunt, Finn-Kelcey's piece appears relatively quotidian: a modestly dressed woman whispers to a pair of timid birds, who are sporadically sedated in the artificial light.

However, embedded in the apparent, comparative quietness of Finn-Kelcey's action, there is also a forceful assertion of criticism and rebuttal at play. Finn-Kelcey's friend and WAC colleague Sonia Knox remembers that, for her, the piece was powerful precisely because of its creation of an aesthetic language that was politically nuanced, beautiful, and founded – in opposition to dominant forms – in the experience of a woman.⁷² Notably infantilising Finn-Kelcey by referring to her as a 'girl', Sharkey genders Finn-Kelcey's work as normatively 'feminine' (he also commented of a later performance that Finn-Kelcey 'looked strikingly beautiful in static Hollywood style'), and outlines a dichotomy in British performance art between 'the male artist' presenting himself variously in passive roles, and the contrasting 'femininity of artists like Carlyle Reedy, Jackie Lansley or Tina Keane', which 'often forces them to exaggerate the active stance and exploit the ambiguities of role playing'.⁷³ This totalising portrayal of a gender binary is problematic in that it assumes that 'feminine' (meaning women) artists are somehow 'forced' to exaggerate activeness in resistance to an essential passivity implied by Sharkey (the women's activeness is not seen as a deliberate tactic of their own agency, as it is by Pollock) – but it also points to the irreconcilable set of problems around identification and how to escape assumptions of identity; how can the experience of a woman, as seen by Knox, be represented and read as such in art works by women?

⁷¹ While the wider documentation suggests that the coyote is most likely playing with Beuys, the singular image appears quite unnerving.

⁷² Sonia Knox, interview with the author, 26 June 2014, London.

⁷³ Sharkey, 'Performance Art in Britain', p. 48

Like the magpies, Finn-Kelcey is drawn to steal or ‘borrow’ from others; she can never understand or be fully engaged in the calls of the birds, although she attempted to imitate them, nor is she in a position to maintain established modes of expression and visual languages commanded by men, which the artist is forced to use in the absence of recognisable, shared expressions of women with which she identifies. Her performance notes read, ‘I regard working from a codified – though non-verbal – text, as analogous to my desire to find an appropriate voice for my experience as a woman artist’;⁷⁴ the artist searches for the possibility of a self-defined language, a third area negotiated between and beyond the binaries of ‘borrowed’ or ‘belonging’. In her interview with Lisa Tickner, Finn-Kelcey said of the appearance of the magpie in her work that:

It was the end of a period of wanting to be like them, wanting to be accepted on male terms, establishment terms which must be male terms, and so I went overboard to make everything large, undecorative and serious looking [...] I see now how I was really confined by an attitude, so defensive, a bit like saying ‘I can do it too’ – maybe a bit better.⁷⁵

Here, Finn-Kelcey underplays the value of her earlier work using wind-dependent objects to perform powerful interventions in public space, as products of her desire for ‘acceptance’. For instance, it is difficult to regard *Power for the People* (1972), four large flags bearing their title, which were made from ‘silver tissue and black bunting’,⁷⁶ flown at each corner of Battersea Power Station, as other than innovative, subversive, anti-establishment, and wryly playful statements, and not simply as ‘serious looking’ works of art.⁷⁷ Indeed, there were complaints

⁷⁴ This statement appears in notes on *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, as well as *Her Mistress’s Voice* (Eisteddfod, Wrexham Art Centre, 1977), also appeared later as an artist’s statement in the programme for *London Calling presents Performance Plus* (16 – 23 January 1978), The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁷⁵ Rose Finn-Kelcey interviewed by Tickner, ‘One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth’, p. 66.

⁷⁶ Rose Finn-Kelcey, untitled and undated note, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁷⁷ Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, p. 184-7.

from local residents about the work and the Director of the Central Electricity Generating Board demanded that 'People' be replaced with the apparently softer word 'Nation'; Finn-Kelcey refused, leading to the breakdown of a month of negotiations and finally the removal of the flags.⁷⁸ A document in the artists' archive suggests that Finn-Kelcey may have projected patterns onto the walls or surfaces of a local playground in order to cut out her huge flags, before hand-tacking and reinforcing the lettering with a large sewing machine. The results of this practice were exhibited in specifically anti-establishment, artist-led contexts such as those of SPACE (Space Provision Artistic, Cultural and Education) in London,⁷⁹ and entirely in keeping with the political and artistic uses of craft by early feminist and suffragist artists and activists in their subversion of the 'woman's sphere'.⁸⁰

Meeting and collaborating with Tina Keane was particularly influential to Finn-Kelcey's turn to performance, and in the summer of 1976 the two artists undertook a project (or long-term performance work) entitled *Old Wives' Tales*, in which they recorded and documented conversations with the oldest women they could find across a range in specific localities in order to redress the lack of existing representation.⁸¹ As with flag-making, performance pushed Finn-Kelcey's art towards heightened states of interactivity, as she began to produce work that was increasingly grounded in its interrelation with the environment and participants, whether as spectators or as performers.⁸²

Time and again Finn-Kelcey would strategically muddle 'inside' and 'outside' spaces as analogous to the foundational feminist conception of the personal as political, where the

⁷⁸ *Time Out*, 18 July – 3 August 1972 [clipping], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁷⁹ For example, *Here is a Gale Warning* (1971) exhibited at the city-wide *Art Spectrum London* (11–30 August 1971). The *SPACE* initiative was established in 1969; Greater London Arts newsletter August 1971.

⁸⁰ For an excellent account of suffragist artist-activist use of craft and performance, see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

⁸¹ Document entitled 'Old Wives Tales', The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. Keane's later film *Shadow of a Journey* (1980), for which Finn-Kelcey is also listed as collaborator, may have been a direct or indirect outcome of the research conducted for *Old Wives' Tales*.

⁸² Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 24.

‘private’ moves into the ‘public’ sphere and vice versa. In *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, as Finn-Kelcey wrote in her notes, we see the artist in dialogue with the birds, but simultaneously she turns her gaze inwards. As Finn-Kelcey noted: ‘Magpie as Ego / Feeding my ego.’⁸³ Offering the birds food and objects, to be accepted or rejected by them, expresses the artist’s perpetual quest for nourishment, located within, rather than in spite of, the unpredictability of the live interaction between bodies. Within this framework, Finn-Kelcey reclaims aspects of prescribed ‘femininity’ as a material for use, citing qualities of timidity, uncertainty, cautiousness, and fragility. The process of negotiation, between and beyond acceptance and rejection, of the ‘Magpie as Ego’ signals Finn-Kelcey’s wider process-as-practice of becoming, of the socially constructed, composite identity, between the ‘outside’ (the given) and the ‘inside’ (the self-defined) of the woman and woman artist. In her later works Finn-Kelcey brought ‘outside’ spaces inside, and vice versa, in very literal ways; for example in *God Kennel* (1992), *Join the Dots* (1997), and *Pearly Gate* (1997), Finn-Kelcey brings features of ‘outside’ landscapes (a dog house, hay, and a farmyard gate, respectively) into the gallery. In *Bar Doors* (1991) uncanny saloon-style doors stand independently in a Texan public park, and *It Pays to Pray* (1999) gives passing walkers in Sussex woodland the opportunity to select prayers (named after chocolate bars) from vending machines. Strikingly, for a solo show at Milton Keynes Gallery, Finn-Kelcey re-produced the building structure and shop front of her local Chinese takeaway in miniature inside the gallery in *Take-Away* (2006).

Although *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* utilised tropes of ‘femininity’ in order to critically examine the overlapping outward perceptions and lived realities of the ‘woman artist’, broadly speaking Finn-Kelcey’s work rarely explored or demonstrated any interest in shoring up ‘feminine’ aesthetics in culturally pre-determined, normative senses. Here I refer to now familiar assumptions of ‘femininity’ as being bound up with ornamental, quiet, and precious

⁸³ Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, p. 14.

characteristics, for example, in binary opposition to the technical, assertive strength of ‘masculinity’. Her subsequent performance work, *Her Mistress’s Voice* (Eisteddfod, Wrexham Art Centre, 1977), which was, Finn-Kelcey said, ‘conceived and executed in a spirit of play’, consisted of a ‘live collage’, performed with the assistance of Harry Walton.⁸⁴ Finn-Kelcey regularly credited Walton as ‘technicien du rêve’ or architect of dreams in publicity material relating to her performances and other works of this period – which seems to counteract more typical claims for singularity and hermetic authorship in the art historical canon (I wonder here how changed accounts of the practice of even the most lauded ‘genius’ male artists in history would appear if their women friends, colleagues, lovers, and collaborators were credited in this fashion).⁸⁵ In *Her Mistress’s Voice*, pairs of various objects (‘dinosaurs, fir trees, sausages’) were placed within a large circle formed by an electric toy train track, and recorded baby noises sounded in the darkened room.⁸⁶ Interacting with corresponding objects, Finn-Kelcey attempted to articulate the magpies’ language; her distaste for her own voice, as documented in her notes,⁸⁷ is paralleled in the folkloric ‘ugliness’ of the magpie call.⁸⁸ A Welsh woman’s ‘translation’ of the magpie calls added to the aural collage, and the piece reached a climax as Finn-Kelcey, lying on her back, screamed her phonetic imitations to the limit of her breath.⁸⁹ Audience members reported feeling ‘threatened’; according to Finn-Kelcey, one man angrily

⁸⁴ Tickner, ‘One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth’, p. 61.

⁸⁵ There is a growing field of scholarship which returns to historical narratives of singular male artists and gives credit to the work of previously marginalised or invisible women partners and co-creators. For instance, see Joan Rothfuss’s recent scholarship on Charlotte Moorman; Joan Rothfuss, ‘The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte: A Revisionist History’, in *Nam June Paik*, ed. by Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert (London: Tate, 2010), pp. 145-168; Joan Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2014). I will return to this research in my next chapter.

⁸⁶ Tickner, ‘One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth’, p. 61.

⁸⁷ Rose Finn-Kelcey, undated and untitled document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

⁸⁸ Walwin, ‘Rose Finn-Kelcey’, pp. 137-8.

⁸⁹ One review recalls that at this point in the performance Finn-Kelcey invoked a witches’ spell from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*; see Alan McPherson, “‘There’s another way of communicating, and it’s not through meaning’: Performance Art at Wrexham”, *Artscribe*, 8 (September 1977) 52-4 (p. 54).

said, ‘You really can’t treat your audience like that, you really can’t relate to people like that’.⁹⁰

As told to Tickner, Finn Kelcey noted that:

it was apparently because I was at the time a very *strong person*, a very strong woman, and it was the other extreme from the weakness side that I happened to feel [...] when I was in it, I felt very able, in a way that I’m [...] not at many other times [...] I just don’t think both men and women are familiar with seeing that, I don’t think they’re familiar with angry women anyway who are also *creative*... it must have hit on some kind of nerve ending.⁹¹

Finn-Kelcey’s attempt to find a language appropriate to her by borrowing from others; here, her imitation or ‘translation’ of the magpies is mirrored in the Welsh ‘translation’. This is in one sense aesthetically frustrated (her imitations would never be as ‘good’ as the ‘real thing’), but also effective in finding a process of ‘live collage’ that foregrounded the composition as an unresolved, shifting constellation of elements in liminal space. Confronting her audience with normally invisible disquiet by putting to use, and perhaps even cannibalising, her own anxiety and uncertainty as a kind of unbelonging subject, Finn-Kelcey demonstrates a process of grappling with artistic and ontological nomadism. As Catherine de Zegher writes of ‘women artists’, a practice emerges which is based on ‘subjective transitivity’; de Zegher clarifies, ‘[c]hallenging the existing canon, this vision brings forward an idea based not on essence or negation but on the idea of an artist working through traces coming from others to whom she or he is “borderlinked”’.⁹²

While Finn-Kelcey was drawn, at least in part, to the fluidity and flexibility of performance, there is also evidence that she felt self-conscious and tentative about being seen as

⁹⁰ Tickner, ‘One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth’, p. 63. Emphasis in original.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² De Zegher, ‘Introduction’, p. xviii.

a ‘performer’. Anne Bean was a peer and friend of Finn-Kelcey’s and also used her own body as a material within her sculptural work made during the 1970s. Bean sensed that Finn-Kelcey worried about the term ‘performance artist’, as there was a perception that the term might be used by professionals entrenched in strictly ‘visual art’ traditions as a form of dismissal, or a way of discounting performance practice as legitimate art.⁹³ Indeed, there is evidence for a climate of scepticism of performance amongst wider visual art milieus; to refer again to Mary Kelly’s comments on the potential of women’s use of their own bodies to be ‘complicit’ with perceived pre-determined, gendered categories, ‘Men were artists; women were performers’.⁹⁴

Examination of Finn-Kelcey’s work alongside her personal notes suggests that she worked to refuse this kind of compartmentalisation and embraced a broad conception of performance as foundational to her practice that revolved around states of flux and re-invention. As Catherine Elwes wrote, ‘[t]he shapes [Finn-Kelcey] takes on are never an easy fit, her costume is only ever borrowed, and its wearing is as absurdly contradictory as lived experience’.⁹⁵ This notion of the ‘contradictory’ lived experience, compounded in the changeable ‘costume’ identity is well illustrated in another early photographic piece by Finn-Kelcey, *Divided Self (Speakers’ Corner)* (1974), which shows a double image of the artist seated on a bench in Hyde Park in conversation with herself. Cixous’ notion of the ‘several, simultaneous’ body is manifested as the two figures are caught in dialogue, looking across at each other.⁹⁶ However, there was a point at which Finn-Kelcey began to question the live body in performance as a ‘borrowed’ costume, and already-occupied space. Later, in the 1990s, she commented:

I suppose for me the work has always been about re-inventing myself each time, and not believing that anything is stable. Never believing that there is a foundation from

⁹³ Anne Bean, interview with the author, London, 9 July 2014.

⁹⁴ Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 29.

⁹⁵ Elwes, ‘In Praise of Older Women’, p. 17.

⁹⁶ Cixous, ‘Coming to Writing’, p. 29.

which I work – which is untrue in reality because obviously there is a foundation – but in my mind I don't have that. I always feel that I'm starting again each time as if I've never done it before.⁹⁷

This process of invention and re-invention was complemented by Finn-Kelcey's painstakingly meticulous approach to working and reworking her ideas, by which images and texts would be researched and re-crafted through many 'draft' versions before settling. The sapping and additive force of the work, and the difficulty in attempting to forge and *realise* it, came to a form of apex for Finn-Kelcey in 1980. By this time, WAC had effectively disbanded,⁹⁸ but several members came together again in the (unprecedentedly 'mainstream', as I have explained) context of *About Time*.⁹⁹

In her *About Time* proposal, Finn-Kelcey outlined her initial ideas for a 35-minute performance, '*Mind the Gap* – a subject in the negative who wants to displace the horizon', which was to have 'some of the atmospheric and dynamic qualities found in concisely edited T.V. advertisement, cameo music-hall turns, and attempts to break athletic records'.¹⁰⁰ She wrote,

the silent assumptions are vocalised, visualised / toppling old conceptions, creating shifting viewpoints, / signalling in fluid space, dancing on viscosity, / the experience of 'oddness' / is not under the carpet... / Here I take my stand / anger is the space in the middle / caught between two / focussed consciousness and diffuse awareness.

Here, the negotiation of a 'third area', situated between and within the 'gaps' is manifested explicitly and clearly. Again, Finn-Kelcey utilises and reshapes the potentially debilitating

⁹⁷ Finn-Kelcey and Wiltshire, *Conversation*, p. 25.

⁹⁸ Sonia Knox recalled that WAC may have disbanded due to struggles around members' differences and individual aims and ideas, though Knox and Finn-Kelcey did not want to 'split'; Knox, interview with the author.

⁹⁹ See Chapter One.

¹⁰⁰ Rose Finn-Kelcey, 'Proposal for a Performance, November 1980', The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

questions of how to say, how to appear, and how to express *as* the substance and strength of her work. Catherine Elwes' review, the artists' personal records, and Harry Walton's detailed account, including a retrospectively crafted maquette, of the event, enable me to suggest an account of *Mind the Gap*.¹⁰¹ The performance began in the darkness of the ICA theatre, the audience taking their seats, arranged in parallel rows, facing one another across a central aisle. At one end, two white plinths support a large, rectangular prism of ice. At the other end, a treadmill waits in the entrance to an adjoining gallery, its chrome glowing beneath an ultra-violet spotlight. A Marconi radio, amplified by a microphone, occupies another plinth in the corner, and in the centre of the aisle, a small electric flame flickers on a lamp stem. Tape-recorded sounds of supermarket muzak, 'one blithe tune after another', can be heard in the gallery before Finn-Kelcey's voice-over begins to tell the story of a working process characterised by uncertainty and impossibility.¹⁰² The script reads, 'She didn't know whether to bridge the gap or stand in it', and lists (overly-ambitious) desires to achieve 'speed, anxiety, dexterity, humour, optimism, friction, strength, absurdity, velocity, tempo and exertion'.¹⁰³ Thanking the organisers and apologising for changes to her proposal and her failure to perform, Finn-Kelcey describes a series of variously abandoned and attempted ideas before confessing; 'finally, she didn't know what she wanted to say'.¹⁰⁴

The audience remained seated, sensing (as Kathy Battista puts it) a 'bluff', until the artist did finally appear, dressed simply in pale trousers and shirt, her hair cut close to her head. She silently placed a wire across the block of ice. Weighted by two dumbbells at each end, the wire cuts down and through the ice, almost imperceptibly slowly, for the duration of the

¹⁰¹ Catherine Elwes, Rose Garrard et al, 'About Time at the I.C.A', *P.S.*, 6 (Winter 1980), 8-14 (p. 9); Harry Walton, 'Mind the Gap', in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (Ridinghouse: London, 2013), pp. 86-87.

¹⁰² Walton, 'Mind the Gap', p. 86.

¹⁰³ *Mind the Gap* script and notes, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

performance.¹⁰⁵ Finn-Kelcey disappears from view and a man's voice continues, 'She turned to Chapter Five of *Frankenstein*', and recited a passage where, at the point of the creator's 'terminal exhaustion', the created thing assumes life.¹⁰⁶ Out of a seemingly deathly point of crisis, the artist then re-emerges, mounting the treadmill which 'at last' comes 'lumbering' into activity, as she broke into a slow, steady jog, the body 'showing its strength', as Elwes notes, its movement highlighted by her pale clothing, 'headless and handleless' in the ultra-violet light.¹⁰⁷ As Harry Walton describes, 'The gallery was silent, responsive only to the hum of the machine and the remorseless pacing of the runner'.¹⁰⁸ Finn-Kelcey ran to her limit, having trained for weeks to increase her endurance – which holds particular significance in working against the residual effects of physical difficulties that affected Finn-Kelcey's mobility as a child.¹⁰⁹ At the point of being unable to continue, the artist steps down, and disappears again with the re-introduction of muzak and the woman's voice ('She noted down words like crevice, ravine, gorge, breach, interval, crack, chink, rift, fissure, chasm'), before her final re-appearance. An aural crescendo culminates in the 'shattering sound of an earth rift and the all clear siren – the final irony of a nuclear conclusion,' as Finn-Kelcey moves into visibility, crouching as a runner 'on her marks' before the audience; she maintained her still position, the siren sounding, adamantly waiting for the audience to reluctantly disperse.¹¹⁰

I read *Mind the Gap*, through its archival representation, as emblematic of Finn-Kelcey's developing investigation into ways in which binary systems of identification might be disrupted. The piece can be read as an exercise in this model of feminist understanding,

¹⁰⁵ Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Walton, 'Mind the Gap', p. 87.

¹⁰⁷ Catherine Elwes, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey *Mind the Gap*', in 'About Time at the ICA', p. 228.

¹⁰⁸ Walton, 'Mind the Gap', p. 87.

¹⁰⁹ While Finn-Kelcey's experiences of physical dis/ability in her life has a potentially profound effect on ways in which *Mind the Gap* can be read, it does not appear that Finn-Kelcey generally disclosed this information publicly in her lifetime. I recognise this as an ethical issue in my use of archival information (hence, I do not impart specific details).

¹¹⁰ Elwes, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey *Mind the Gap*', p. 228.

proposed by Jones in *Seeing Differently* (cited at the beginning of this chapter) and others,¹¹¹ which resists total and totalising position-taking, where there can only ever be an oppressive ‘masculine’ patriarchy in opposition to alternately oppressed or liberating ‘femininities’. Finn-Kelcey locates her practice differently, alongside the ever-consuming, continually shifting questions of precisely how to say, to appear, to express, to make work, to place oneself, to live. She occupies a ‘third area’ in refusing to ‘perform’ as expected, or to settle into any single ‘identity’ position. As I explain in the previous chapter, the term ‘third area’ has been used to describe performance and time-based practices, for example as neither painting nor sculpture, but here it also refers to the fluid space between and beyond identity binaries. This enables generative strategies for addressing the potentially exhausting problems of representations and interpretations of gendered experience and ‘femininity’. Particularly, Jones draws on José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of ‘disidentification’ as a third area strategy that is neither identification nor counter-identification.¹¹² For Muñoz, it allows a means of describing ‘survival’ strategies, specifically of ‘queers of color’ (in renegotiating the ‘white ideal’ and (imperialist, capitalist, patriarchal) normativity by utilising shared marginality, ugliness, or ‘damaged’ stereotypes or politics as means of self-creation.¹¹³ Writing over a decade later, Jones rearticulates Muñoz’s concept by pointing out the problems of a ‘minoritarian/majoritarian binary’ that she perceives in Muñoz’s argument, and focusses instead on more general applications of tactical ‘negotiation with existing cultural codes’, and movements back and forth between reception and production.¹¹⁴ Here, I would also draw attention to what Muñoz suggests to me about a desire that is troubled but also troubling, where he writes, ‘[we] desire it but

¹¹¹ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 1.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹³ Focussing on cultural contexts in the US, Muñoz develops his theory via case studies of queer artists of colour, particularly artists working in performance including Vaginal Davis and Carmelita Tropicana. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 4-5, 15.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 9.

desire it with a difference'.¹¹⁵ While Muñoz is arguing specifically about ways in which queer artists of colour might strategically recognise and reformulate seemingly 'self-compromising' desires, such as the 'desire for a white beauty ideal',¹¹⁶ this could also work towards thinking about dis/identificatory strategies in Finn-Kelcey's performances in relation to 'femininity'.

Drawing on Jones' theorisation of identification (which draws from and adapts Muñoz's), but also Harvie's feminist and materialist critique of 'presence' enables me to further understand subjective transitivity in Finn-Kelcey's performance works while also retaining the ontological nomadism or multiplicity that I argue is key to her cultural practice. While functioning in complex, multiple (and perhaps in places even contradictory) ways, at the same time, the performance avoids succumbing to mystification by foregrounding the labour of the work, and the labouring body, playing with expectations of 'productivity' (of work, of presence), on which the institution itself relies. As Jen Harvie points out, absence can be utilised by (woman) artists as a tool for subverting commodification (the assumed 'service provision' of an artistic display) and problematising the 'availability' of women and their given experiences.¹¹⁷ Finn-Kelcey's enactment of appearing and disappearing, of visibility and invisibility, before reaching a final position of 'silence', constitutes a subversion of the displayed 'female object', but also, as she told Tickner, of the painful and awkward legacy of growing up in the patriarchal family structure, in which 'women weren't supposed to have opinions'.¹¹⁸ Time and space for interpretive and interrogative thought are expanded, opening up the possibilities of a silence – not one of complicity, but of renegotiating inadequate 'man-made' languages and hegemonic structures of representation.¹¹⁹ In 1967, Susan Sontag wrote 'Silence remains, inescapably, a

¹¹⁵ Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Harvie, 'Being Her', pp. 196, 201.

¹¹⁸ Rose Finn-Kelcey interviewed by Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 61.

¹¹⁹ For a summary of ways in which verbal-textual English language is made by and for men, see Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Pandora, 1985).

form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue.¹²⁰

This is evidenced in that Finn-Kelcey is able to claim voices and create spaces in a way that is powerful because there is no definitive ‘answer’ in the work, whose politics must be located in intersections across the personal and political, the experiential and factual, and the feeling and intellectual.

This refusal of containment is perhaps typified in the artist’s waiting impetuously on the starting line, the audience already frustrated by the sustained sense of non-starting. Finn-Kelcey insists on the discursive, interpretive space of open-ended silence without succumbing to an empty (feel-good) mysticism, and mystification of the critical issues at stake. Though Sontag argues that ‘art’, as a singular and generic myth, is itself a form of mystification,¹²¹ I rearticulate this here in terms of the specific historical context of Finn-Kelcey’s work as a productive form of subjective complication. Some, but not all art mystifies and exists within the boundaries of its own mystery, which then stifles dialogue in the seeming futility of questioning. Rightly so, Sontag also warns of the ‘unhistorical’ project of silence as a dubious invocation of ‘the ineffable’, which must be circumnavigated with caution.¹²² Finn-Kelcey’s work, I argue, points not to unknowability (as distinct from uncertainty, which she deals in explicitly), but to interpretive possibility. Her action, and my representation of it, is rooted in dialogue with spatial and temporal context, as well as in an awareness of self-positioning – in this case as part of a feminist exhibition brought about as a result – as I explain in the previous chapter – of lobbying and renegotiation of a mainstream gallery space that was, in 1980, actively patriarchal.

Through the early and mid-1980s, Finn-Kelcey continued to rework the concept of performances of absence or disappearing, which she defined in collaboration with Walton as

¹²⁰ Susan Sontag, ‘The Aesthetics of Silence’, in *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 3-34 (p. 11).

¹²¹ Sontag, ‘The Aesthetics of Silence’, p. 4.

¹²² Sontag, ‘The Aesthetics of Silence’, p. 30.

‘vacated performance’, inquiring into ‘a desire to make performances which questioned the assumption that a performance necessarily requires a human performer, and that without one all human presence is absent’.¹²³ This desire stemmed, in part, from Finn-Kelcey’s perception of an inescapability of the body of the ‘woman performer’ as a focal point which diverts attention from or clouds other concepts, as well as from exasperation with expectations of ‘stage charisma’ and narrow conceptions of (stage) presence and absence.¹²⁴ Subsequently, Finn-Kelcey moved away from using her body directly as a material, and towards different ways of utilising it as a tool – as she did in *Bureau de Change* (1987), by working on and from the floor, meticulously arranging £1000 worth of loose change to resemble Van Gogh’s ‘priceless’ *Still Life: Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers* (1888). In her later work, Finn-Kelcey continued to challenge institutional prejudice against women artists in public spaces through interactive installation. For instance, in *Pearly Gate* (Camden Arts Centre, 1997), the viewer is confronted with an over-sized, opalescent gate in the centre of the gallery; it looks clinically clean but also vaguely recalls an uncanny sense of the pastoral. While in part an homage to a distantly remembered rural childhood, the work also represents a mechanism by which, in Finn-Kelcey’s words, ‘you’re either let through or you’re excluded’ from cultural spaces.¹²⁵ Perhaps even more significantly, the work’s pristine perfection poses an ironically seductive but also off-putting challenge to attempt to pass through the untouchable (in a sense, forbidding) gateway.¹²⁶

While the aesthetic experience of Finn-Kelcey’s work often seems to reach towards formal structure and beauty, subtlety and delicately overlapping concepts, this is always synthesised with profound criticisms of ‘power and *who holds the power*’ as a ‘necessary’

¹²³ Rose Finn-Kelcey, Serpentine Gallery Proposal October 1981 [*Glory*], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

¹²⁴ Rose Finn-Kelcey, untitled and undated note [in folder containing notes on works 1971-77], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

¹²⁵ Finn-Kelcey and Wiltshire, p. 18

¹²⁶ Catherine Elwes has also commented on the ‘discouraging’ effect of the ‘formica-white perfection’ of *Pearly Gate* in Elwes, ‘In Praise of Older Women’, p. 18.

ingredient, even when unwanted (for example, in a desire to flee categorisation as a matter of ‘issue-based’ art).¹²⁷ This is perhaps particularly well illustrated in *Steam Installation* (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 1992), where Finn-Kelcey ‘played god’ by designing a warm, swirling mass of steam, contained only by invisible curtains of cold air in the centre of a chilly ex-warehouse space.¹²⁸ Working at the intersection of the visible and the invisible, Finn-Kelcey’s artwork calls on multiple senses, reveals the normally hidden qualities of the environment, and invites interrogation through her work as a catalysing force. Indeed, Finn-Kelcey’s fascination with Yves Klein’s *Leap Into the Void* (1960) – where upwards trajectory of the body, and downwards pull of gravity meet in a void-like space of equal possibility – opens up rich territory for thinking about her work when considered alongside the inverted body of *The Restless Image*.¹²⁹ The body is seen simultaneously as an expression, an instrument, and a trace of a kind of liberation and ‘opening up’ of worlds of possibility and desire. Klein positioned his work in terms of an ostentatiously cryptic notion of a Rosicrucian ‘desire world’,¹³⁰ whereas for Finn-Kelcey, the desire is perhaps located in the possibility for self-determination in the ‘void’, in a space of fluidity between and without the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

Finn-Kelcey’s practice was articulate while often troubling coherency or occupying positions of strategic silence, as I have said. For instance, Finn-Kelcey used objects, figures, or recordings which ‘stand-in’ for her own body and voice or where, as in *Glory* (Serpentine Gallery, 1983), where card cut-out models act as ‘surrogate performers’ in her place.¹³¹ The restlessness of Finn-Kelcey’s thinking and practice is evidenced in the formal mutations of her images across time, up to the point at which her body would no longer allow her to speak or

¹²⁷ Rose Finn-Kelcey interview in *Audio Arts* [cassette], ed. by William Furlong, 12.2-3 [Documenta 9] (1992).

¹²⁸ Sarah Kent, ‘Blowing Hot and Cold’, in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (London: Ridinghouse, 2013), pp. 199-203 (p. 201).

¹²⁹ Rose Finn-Kelcey, extract from a lecture given on the occasion of an *Yves Klein* exhibition (Hayward Gallery, 1995), *Audio Arts* [cassette], ed. by William Furlong, 15.4 (1996).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *Glory* [VHS], BAFV.1189, British Artists’ Film & Video Study Collection, Central Saint Martins, London.

do, with the debilitating onset of motor neurone disease in 2013.¹³² In her practicing lifetime, Finn-Kelcey was concerned about being seen as ‘belonging’ or relegated only to an ‘older generation’ rooted in the 1970s, by which her art would be assumed ‘redundant’, and she would succumb to the lure of retreating to a final place of stand-still.¹³³ In light of the diversity of Finn-Kelcey’s practice across time, and her continual, active engagement in self-criticism (for example, retrospectively reflecting on the limitations of the self-perceived ‘radicalism’ of alternative art spaces in the 1970s) the possibility of this form of temporal compartmentalisation seems misplaced.¹³⁴ Finn-Kelcey’s ability to bridge and form productive coalitions that refuse expected or confining categories flourished in the form and content of her work, but also in the force of her growing desire to strive for equality and difference in anti-separatist, egalitarian processes and collaborations – for example in her work with artist and Black British arts activist Donald Rodney, whom Finn-Kelcey greatly admired.¹³⁵

As I have also shown in this chapter, Finn-Kelcey’s approaches to expanded notions of presence and performance in uses of both her own body and objects productively merged a range of feminisms, which – for example, in their dis/identificatory modes – complicate narratives of successive political generations, and perceived anachronisms of feminist performance in the 1970s. Through Finn-Kelcey’s performances, links can be made between different histories, such as those arising from the US, where women pioneered models of consciousness-raising and women’s studies programmes, as well as some of the varied feminisms arising from France, which has produced both theoretical approaches (particularly those which rearticulate psychoanalytic principles) as well as practice-based models which

¹³² Brett, ‘Rose Finn-Kelcey Obituary’.

¹³³ Finn-Kelcey and Wiltshire, *Conversation*, p. 10.

¹³⁴ Finn-Kelcey and Wiltshire, *Conversation*, p. 7-9.

¹³⁵ Donald Rodney was a founder member of the BLK Art Group, see ‘Press Release: Truth, Dare, Double-Dare... Rose Finn-Kelcey and Donald G Rodney’, and ‘Information: Press Release, New Collaborative Installation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Donald Rodney’ [Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 4 June - 15 July 1994], National Art Library Information File ‘Rose Finn-Kelcey’, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

rigorously rejected or questioned established tenets of theory. For example, in my understanding of Finn-Kelcey's work I draw on both Hélène Cixous, who places herself within a theoretical framework while also redefining theory in her 'writing of the self',¹³⁶ and Marguerite Duras, who called for women to reject men's 'theoretical rattle' in favour of expanding on creative practices as a new criteria for intelligence:¹³⁷ both pertinent models for thinking about Finn-Kelcey's processes, as her notes – which draw on multiple feminisms – also suggest.

While I have argued that the questions asked by feminists and women artists in the 1970s remain central to important continuing discussions today, I also recognise that many of Finn-Kelcey's peers, such as Catherine Elwes, Carolee Schneemann, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and others rightly protest relegation to the status of '1970s' artist – or, the even more restrictive, '1970s feminist' artist.¹³⁸ A feminist historiographical approach must be particularly conscious of ways in which artists are diminished and ultimately silenced where they are wittingly or unwittingly confined by curators, history-makers, and institutions to a specific era.¹³⁹ Within this form of containment, women and their work exist as 'secrets' to be discovered, which may be displayed and treasured in their 'rarity', but are then in turn liable to remain as tokens or static fetish-objects of the archive, and discursively silenced where mere presence or naming is regarded as an adequate treatment of the subject. It is important to note, therefore, that my archival approach does not seek to contain the work as or within 'documents' of another era – but is used to explore how the work holds resonance and relevance in its uses for us today.

¹³⁶ Hélène Cixous, 'Coming to Writing'.

¹³⁷ Marguerite Duras, 'Smothered Creativity'.

¹³⁸ Elwes, 'In Praise of Older Women'.

¹³⁹ Archival recovery may be deployed strategically as an act of historical 'legitimation' of contemporary artists, while also relegating and reinforcing binaries and hierarchies between social, political, and cultural positions – which are organised around simplifications of 'progress' and 'anachronism' and justifications of taste. For example, ICA records dated 1979 show programmers' aversion to curating Joseph Beuys as a perceived artist of the 1960s, (letter from Cob Stenham to Sandy Nairne [cc. Bill McAlister], 9 November 1979, TGA 955/2/6/38, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London).

Recognising the achievements of women artists, and continuing to engage and take pleasure in their work across time remains an important imperative for feminists and historians. The extraordinary challenges posed by Finn-Kelcey in her work enable the deployment and development of models of art and interrogation, as proposed by Jones, which ‘rethink’ and are ‘relevant to our increasingly complex experience of myriad identifications’, as we continue to revise and reshape how we perform in theory, and in practice, actively and consciously, towards vital reorganisations of power.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 239.

Chapter Three

Love-Fucks: Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman

To recap on the way in which the narrative of this thesis corresponds to a timeline of historical events, I began in Chapter One, at the ‘end’, where the cumulative force of feminist innovations in art practice, activism, and theory through the 1970s produced interventions into the mainstream of the ICA and surrounding physical and discursive spaces. This is emblematised, in this research, by *About Time* and the 1980 ‘women’s season’, which spread across London gallery spaces and mainstream media networks. This chapter, conversely, returns to a ‘beginning’ – and takes as its focus the germinating years of the ‘long 1970s’, which, as I explain in my introduction, I construct as emerging from the experiments of the late 1960s. While I am aware, as I have said, that the neat compartmentalisation of cultural ‘periods’ can never fully account for the slippage and lines of influence between different activities across history, 1968 is characterised here as a focal point at which the practices and established tenets of modernism and the modernist avant-garde movements come into forceful critique, particularly as new practices by (women) artists begin to galvanise with increasingly collective force. Importantly for this thesis, 1968 was also the ICA’s first year in their newly opened Nash House premises.

In this chapter I examine how works by US-based artists Carolee Schneemann and Charlotte Moorman - presented during the first year of the ‘new’ ICA - establish a framework for understanding feminist representation and interpretation which continues to emerge through the 1970s and beyond. As they intervene into a cultural climate in which key male figures of modernism had been secure in their integration into institutions of art as ‘patron saints’ (as I will go on to explain), Schneemann and Moorman are exemplary in their pursuit of

new acts of artistic infidelity. Related to that, and to add to the re-mixed chronology of the narrative of this thesis, I suggest that their use of their own naked and explicit bodies comprises part of the groundwork of later developments in feminist art and interpretation. For instance, they are antecedent to Cosey Fanni Tutti's use of pornographic images of her own body in her *Magazine Actions* of the mid-1970s, which I will look at in further detail in the next chapter. They are also important subjects for study in relation to crucial debates happening in later feminist discussion. For example, in performance studies and related fields Rebecca Schneider's totemic study *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997) marked renewed attention to ways in which women's use of their own explicit bodies and sexual agency holds potential not only for shifting the 'terms of transgression', but also for disrupting misdirecting binaries;¹ such as those organised around women's 'victimhood' at the hands of men.

Drawing on Schneider's model of interpretation and her historical account of feminist practice, which also situates Schneemann's and other artists' practices in relation to modernist histories, I expand on research into the (woman) artist's explicit body in performance as a disruptive or defiling subject in the context of the art museum. In addition to that, I also outline ways in which acts of artistic 'infidelity' carried out by Schneemann and Moorman radically destabilise conventions and assumptions of authorship and 'authenticity'. In what follows I look in closer detail at Schneemann's presentation of her *Naked Action Lecture* at the ICA which was followed by a screening of her 'love-fuck' film *Fuses* (1965) in summer 1968.² Then, I turn to Charlotte Moorman's evening of *Avant-Garde Music* with her long-term collaborator the Korean-born artist Nam June Paik in the autumn. However, I will first build a portrait, of the context of the ICA at this moment in history, in order to understand how these works can be understood as important feminist interventions.

¹ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 4.

² A publicity poster, advertising *Fuses* as Schneemann's 'love-fuck' can be found at 'Publicity: Posters and Flyers, 1969 - 1980', TGA 815/2/3/10/5, David Mayor Collection, Tate Archive, London.

As I outlined in my introduction, from the ICA's very first events in 1948, prominent founding figures modelled the institution on values of experimentation, social dialogue between artists and patrons, and emerging arts and artists. For instance, Herbert Read insisted on the impetus of the institution as being 'an adult play-centre, a workshop where work is joy, a source of vitality and daring experiment' in contrast to the 'bleak' standing *modus operandi* of museums.³ Similarly, Roland Penrose advocated that the ICA should challenge established museological imperatives of 'fine art' galleries by favouring experimentation over limited notions of artistic 'achievement' (which, for Penrose, were represented by the art academies).⁴ For both Read and Penrose, the ICA was to offer a point of difference to the 'stagnant' arts institutions and their seeming reluctance to provide platforms for the experiments of emergent modernisms.⁵ A tension between the 'newness' and experimentation sought by the ICA's committee, and the potentially limiting influence of tradition is brought into particularly sharp focus around the time of the gallery's move from 17-18 Dover Street (where they had been based since 1950) to their new Nash House premises on The Mall. Following lengthy efforts of patrons to accumulate resources, and negotiate with Crown Estates and four other co-tenant arts societies, the new ICA opened to the public on 10 April 1968. At this time, the gallery's incumbent director Michael Kustow – who had previously worked at the Royal Shakespeare Company with Peter Brook – described the ICA as representative of the rising youth generation responding to times of crises and bewilderingly new 'strange patterns' of life in the late 1960s.⁶

³ 'From *Forty Years of Modern Art* [...] Introduction by Herbert Read [1967]', TGA 955/2/2/7, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁴ Roland Penrose, 'Why I Am A Painter [1938]', <<http://www.rolandpenrose.co.uk/Painter.aspx>> [accessed 28 October 2013].

⁵ Read 'From *Forty Years*'.

⁶ Michael Kustow, 'A task for the ICA: a first statement by Michael Kustow' *ICA Bulletin*, 178 (February 1968), TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London. Kustow became director of the ICA aged 28; having been educated at University of Oxford, a supporter of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and a one-time member of

The main exhibitions during the first year at Nash House included figurative painting and sculpture (*The Obsessive Image*), technology, cybernetics, and art (*Cybernetic Serendipity*), and a double exhibition of early twentieth century French avant-garde artist and poet Guillaume Apollinaire and leading artist and poet of the 'Liverpool scene' Adrian Henri (*Tout Terriblement... Guillaume Apollinaire // Adrian Henri: Painter/Poet*). The year closed with *Fluorescent Chrysanthemums*, which was, according to critic Edward Lucie-Smith, Europe's first major exhibition of contemporary Japanese art and culture.⁷ Poetry readings, performances, experimental concerts, screenings and talks all ran continuously alongside the programme of exhibitions, offering something different nearly every day. For Kustow, it was a time of 'creative innovation and conformist rebellion, materialism and mysticism, defiance and compliance', and unprecedented possibility for '[a] centre which is a melting-pot, a crucible, a combustion-chamber'.⁸ Situated closely to Buckingham Palace, the bastion of monarchical tradition, the ICA is wilfully suspended between the cultural 'centre', and the 'margins' of experimentation in the arts.⁹ In his statement, Kustow readily acknowledges that the institution is modelled on a state of contradiction, of defiance and compliance and 'conformist rebellion', which works towards delineating the limits of the ICA's subversive potentiality. Enticing the 'rising generation' to witness and participate in the museological presentation of the 'new' (epistemological limits of which I will explore further in this chapter), the ICA is engaged in the perpetual condition of the modernist avant-garde – of a paradoxical and perpetual circuit whereby the new (defined by, and in relation to, the old) becomes tradition, which then incites a newer new, and so on.

a kibbutz in Israel (which were typically based in utopian socialist principles of communal living), he is emblematic of cultural leaders of the New Left in the late 1960s. See, Michael Coveney, 'Michael Kustow Obituary', *Guardian*, 31 August 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/aug/31/michael-kustow>> [accessed 7 December 2015].

⁷ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Things Seen', *The Times*, 21 January 1969, p. 14.

⁸ Michael Kustow, 'A task for the ICA: a first statement', *ICA Bulletin* no. 178 (February 1968), TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁹ Of course, in many respects Buckingham Palace is far from the cultural 'centre' of London, but it nonetheless represents a significant locus of power of 'official' and established cultural tradition.

As I discussed in the previous chapters, tactics which challenge and re-define boundaries between the centre and the margins are valid and important strategies. In the historical context in question, a concentrated site of tensions between conceptions of the experimental and the established are located, in Peter Bürger's terms, in the 'neo-avant-garde' practices which draw from modernist forebears (as Kustow's reference points also imply).¹⁰ Taking modernism as a backdrop for these activities, then, a struggle takes place between competing forces of historical succession (what becomes 'new'), citation (against or alongside which the 'new' is defined), and slippage between different moments and practices (for example, between the poetry of Apollinaire in the 1910s and that of Adrian Henri in the 1960s). Frequently, what ties them together – as Mignon Nixon has suggested of Surrealism – are cultures of brotherhood (or fatherhood) and discipleship,¹¹ which may involve seemingly contradictory modes of fraternity (or paternity) and reverence, but also profanity. These lineages, however, become troubled by the figure of the 'woman artist', as a number of feminist art historians including Nixon, Amelia Jones, and Rebecca Schneider, amongst others, have demonstrated. For example, in her book *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*, Nixon identifies ways in which Louise Bourgeois' employment of 'the comic gesture and the hysterical pose' in her work recasts discipleship, as she 'burlesques her many frustrated attempts to court a master' in a milieu by which she was professionally rejected from the earliest stages of her career in the 1930s and 1940s.¹² Questions of identity and authorship, which – as Nixon says – have more typically secured coherence and unity between an artist's works in art historical interpretation,¹³ are then thrown into states of conflict. For example, in the case of the surrogate son, 'rebellion [against the father figure] is the proof and fulfilment of

¹⁰ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 58.

¹¹ Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2005), p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

the patriarchal bond', whereas this bond is rendered unavailable to the surrogate daughter of the modernist avant-garde, whose admirations are conversely (Nixon argues in Freudian terms) channelled away towards her (hetero)sexual relation to other men.¹⁴ Indeed, as Nixon has explained in the case of Bourgeois and Surrealism, major themes or representational modes are dramatically changed in meaning by the agitated – or, rather, agitating – authorship of the 'woman artist'. For example, in the case of aesthetics or representations of hysteria:

[For Bourgeois,] hysteria's potential to resist patriarchal authority is double-edged. For the hysterical position surrealism celebrates – marked by passivity, fragmentation, and helplessness – holds the danger for a 'woman artist' of being confused with femininity itself. It is one thing to identify, as an artist, with the hysteria of the other, as the male surrealists did: to turn hysterical might feel exciting or terrifying, liberating or rebellious. It is something else to lay claim, as a 'woman artist', to the hysteria that is culturally synonymous with being a woman.¹⁵

The double-dealing authorship of the 'woman artist' who disturbs those patriarchal bonds of the modernist avant-garde is thus consistently shadowed by myths of her unified and unifying femininity.

Fraternal or paternal genealogies of modernism are complemented by notions of the museum as a kind of temple – an established trope emerging from museum studies and related criticism. Particularly, this stems from Benjamin Ives Gilman's 1908 essay outlining ways in which a 'museum of science is in essence a school' and, contrastingly, that 'a museum of art is in essence a temple' of Apollonian creativity, and 'sacred to the imagination'.¹⁶ Indeed, considering the unwritten but generally understood social texts of art galleries, which usually

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶ Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd edition (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2008), p. 23.

include behavioural codes of hushed appreciation, respect, and some knowledge or context of the pseudo-biblical or ‘sacred’ text of the canon, the characterisation of art museums as temples appears plausible. Writing from a secular perspective, I also recognise that attendance at temple can also provide religious and non-religious means of escape, support or sanctuary – much like museums or art institutions. However, from a feminist perspective this condition of the temple requires further interrogation; for example, to draw attention to which gods, saints or idols the museum sets up altars to.

Following the new ICA’s opening celebrations, Norbert Lynton reported in the *Guardian* that as ‘[p]oet, pornographer, playwright, art critic, enthusiast for top and pop culture, herald of l’esprit nouveau – [Guillaume] Apollinaire is the ideal patron saint for the Institute of Contemporary Arts’.¹⁷ Polish-born, Apollinaire was an artist, writer, poet and critic who can be loosely classified as part of the milieu of ‘French futurism’; he also wrote erotic or pornographic fiction, and was influential in the development of several modernist avant-gardes, including Cubism, Dada and Surrealism.¹⁸ Roger Shattuck has written that Apollinaire was a ‘hero-poet’ and mythical figure in social circles of art, and that ‘in his verse and in his life, [Apollinaire] was successively a clown, a scholar, a drunkard, a gourmet, a lover, a criminal, a devout Catholic, a wandering Jew, a soldier’ and finally, ‘a good husband’.¹⁹ His signature styles, as itemised by Willard Bohn, were ‘modernism, spontaneity, and surprise’, and he propelled formal experimentation and interdisciplinarity between visual art and poetry, as in his visual

¹⁷ Norbert Lynton, ‘Apollinaire, drunk on a universe’, *Guardian*, 5 November 1968, p. 6.

¹⁸ Apollinaire was also an artilleryman and infantry officer for the French army during World War One. During the conflict he was hospitalised by shrapnel wounds to the head, and reportedly wrote a number of works while recovering in hospital. He died in 1918 as a result of an influenza pandemic. See Roger Shattuck, ‘Introduction: Apollinaire, Hero-Poet’, in *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, trans. and ed. by Roger Shattuck (New York: New Directions, 1971), pp. 3-54.

¹⁹ Shattuck, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

poems such as the *Caligrammes* (1913-16) series.²⁰ Taking these qualities into consideration, Lynton's remark seems appropriate for the gallery's cosmopolitan programme and 'mission' as outlined by Kustow. Indeed, the characterisation was initially suggested by Kustow, who referred to Apollinaire both in the *ICA Bulletin* and in his opening statement. Kustow outlined an ambitious brief for the ICA, quoting from Apollinaire's poem 'La Jolie Rousse': 'I pronounce judgement on this long quarrel of tradition and invention / Of Order and Adventure'.²¹ That Kustow would later earn a reputation for programming 'orgasmic films' at the ICA,²² including, according to John Baxter, a private screening of 16mm sex films (which was incidentally attended by J.G. Ballard), also chimes with Apollinaire's notoriety as 'pornographer', or writer of erotic fiction.²³

Fittingly for *l'esprit nouveau* of the new ICA, the Nash House opening party ran late into the night and included light shows and projections by conceptual artist Mark Boyle, African drumming, and electronic music, and was enjoyed, according to Kustow's press statement, by 2,000 people.²⁴ Celebrations began, as one commentator wryly observed, with Kustow delivering 'a passionate speech about painful, joyful, shared human response, and [he] went on a bit about William Blake and cleansing the doors of perception'.²⁵ Referring to Aldous Huxley's book *The Doors of Perception* (1954), which detailed the author's experiences of taking the psychedelic drug mescaline, the account seems to lampoon a gushy airiness about Kustow's romantic attitude. This appears to complement other perceptions of

²⁰ Willard Bohn, 'Guillaume Apollinaire and the New York Avant-Garde', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 13.1 (1976), 40-51 (p. 49).

²¹ Kustow reportedly relayed a less accurate translation; Terry Coleman, 'Wild in the Mall: Terry Coleman on the ICA's financial crisis', *Guardian*, 5 December 1968, p. 8; this version is taken from Guillaume Apollinaire, 'The Pretty Red-Head', in *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 195.

²² Terry Coleman, 'Wild in the Mall'. It is possible that Schneemann's *Fuses* may well have been among these 'orgasmic' films.

²³ John Baxter, *The Inner Man: The Life of J.G. Ballard* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2011), pp. 132-133.

²⁴ Press release 26 March 1968, TGA 955/13/1/4, ICA Collection, Tate archive, London.

²⁵ Coleman, 'Wild in the Mall'.

the organisation as rather ‘scatty’, known for events both exciting and terrible, historically geared towards the ‘esoterically minded’,²⁶ and whose palatial offices on the Mall were now always (perhaps suspiciously) well stocked with London’s choice paper of the countercultural underground, the *International Times*.²⁷ Another amusing historical portrayal of the ICA was propagated by George Melly who reportedly referred to the organisation as the ‘Institute of Contemporary Arseholes’ while presenting at Dover Street.²⁸

Despite these characterisations, membership increased dramatically in less than a year from an estimated 500 to 700 members at Dover Street to 37,300 by September 1968.²⁹ This huge increase in profile may have been prompted by a number of large public events geared towards mass audiences which extended beyond the usual confines of the gallery shortly after its opening. For example, the ICA’s *Midsummer High* (29 – 30 June 1968) weekend was the first pop concert at Hyde Park to have been given permission by the Ministry of Works.³⁰

Kustow spared no modesty in billing it:

[a] contribution to London’s community life. A blatant attempt to demoralise British youth. The first real breakthrough in open-air entertainment in this country. A large-scale anti-boredom device. The ICA spreading its net. [...] Various things will never be the same again.³¹

Psychedelic rock bands Pink Floyd and T. Rex played between Indian raga performances, followed by a Saturday night party back at the gallery with sets from the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, The Nice, Junior’s Eyes, and Plastic Dream Machine, and which promised, according to the *ICA Bulletin*, to deliver to the public ‘Films, Occasions, Poets, Filth’. Following the

²⁶ [Author unknown], ‘City Life in Terms of Architecture’, *The Times*, 20 June 1963, p. 14.

²⁷ Coleman, ‘Wild in the Mall’.

²⁸ Barry Miles, *London Calling* (London: Atlantic Books 2010), p. 274.

²⁹ ‘Growth of I.C.A. April – September 1968’ [undated], TGA 955/3/1/12, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁰ Press Release 13 June 1968, TGA 955/13/1/4, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³¹ *ICA Bulletin*, June 1968, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

widespread student protests, worker strikes and revolutionary organising of Paris in spring, the staff and students of Hornsey College of Art, who were the foremost propagators of organised college sit-in protests in the UK, presented their 'Art Transplant' project and *Hornsey Strikes Again* exhibition in the gallery in July. The ICA became a 'communication point' and replica Hornsey canteen for art college staff and students throughout the country engaging in or with the 'Hornsey Revolution'.³² Drawing on Kustow's own account, Lisa Tickner has said of the ICA director's involvement that he was

Sympathetic, if not uncritical, siding with the dissidents meant that he 'paid his dues, as it were, to whatever questioning or "revolutionary" movement might be beginning on his doorstep', and allowed him to signal that the ICA retained its radical credentials, despite its grand new premises.³³

Kustow also drew a distinction between the 'British tone' of the Hornsey activities in their institutional contexts, which produced inquiries and a report, in comparison to the wildcat strikes in Paris, and violent clashes between police and students and staff at the Sorbonne in May of the same year.³⁴ The Hornsey project at the ICA included an installation (also containing sculpture), teach-ins, a canteen, an information point, and projected photographs of Hornsey activities. Here and elsewhere in the ICA's programme, distinctions between more traditional categories of visual art, activism, theatre, music, and poetry are evidently challenged by an interdisciplinary approach to the institution as a 'melting-pot' for new practices and ideas. A letter dated May 1968 in which Kustow appeals for funding for new equipment, clarifies the new director's mission:

³² Press Release 13 June 1968. While enthusiastically offering a platform for the Hornsey staff and students, Kustow refrained from becoming actively involved in Hornsey activities.

³³ Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), pp. 56, 139 n. 108.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

One of the shortest definitions I have found myself using when asked about the ICA's aims is 'to find new definitions for the word **SHOW** – exhibition, spectacle, performance.' It is almost commonplace today to remark that the boundaries between arts are dissolving, but it is nonetheless true. Painters, performers, musicians, writers – all are grappling with analogous problems, borrowing from each other's discoveries, under-standing that the old demarcations often hinder and obstruct the expression of the new experiences crowding in on us all.³⁵

For Kustow, the driving imperatives of newness and catholicity are bound up with performance as a live, unpredictable, and peripatetic form which shifts between more traditional categories of art, or a generative 'third area' (as I have described in previous chapters).

It is fair to say that such activities were successful to a degree in re-defining how an art gallery or museum can function in society – and offered a radically different model to other public galleries in London at the time.³⁶ Clearly, though, there are limits to Kustow's declaration that '[v]arious things will never be the same again'. As I explained in my introduction, the gender imbalance of artists offered a platform at the ICA, overwhelmingly in favour of men, had been established from the ICA's very first exhibition in 1948. Attempts to respond to diversity were made. For instance, Kustow took care to include international and artists of colour in his programmes (though usually limited by specific modes of engagement, as I will explain in further detail in Chapter Five) – yet customary biases against women and minority subjects persisted. One event that illuminates – and toys with – patriarchal imperatives of modernist avant-gardism and the limits of the art-museum-as-temple arrived in the form of a

³⁵ Michael Kustow, 'The New ICA At Nash House', TGA 955/2/2/6, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁶ Past ICA director Sandy Nairne has commented that conservative curatorial imperatives and ingrained prejudices (specifically against women) were evident at Tate, for example, even by the 1990s. Sandy Nairne, interview with the author, 15 August 2013, London.

performance at Nash House by US artist Carolee Schneemann on 27 June, 1968.³⁷ Kustow invited her having already had first-hand experience of Schneemann's work as a participant in her *Kinetic Theater* work for the *Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation* at the Roundhouse in 1967.³⁸

Schneemann's performance at the ICA, titled *Naked Action Lecture*, was, as I have explained, part of a double bill with her 'love-fuck' film (ICA staff edited out Schneemann's confrontational 'fuck' and advertised it instead as her 'Love Film') *Fuses* (1965).³⁹

Documentation of the event is scant in the ICA archive, consisting of a single-line advertisement in the ICA Bulletin, and a critically generous but brief press release document.⁴⁰

Kustow wrote of Schneemann as 'one of the leading figures in that group of American artists who have moved from painting towards happenings and events', adding that the 'main characteristic of her work is a rediscovery of the hidden potentialities of the human body, a movement through conflict into joy'.⁴¹ Like many other artists (particularly women) working in performance from the 1960s onwards (as with those involved in the later *About Time*), Schneemann took steps to document her own 'istory' as she calls it, a gender-neutral term designed to shed light on the gendered characteristics of history as a discourse.⁴² From the

³⁷ Schneemann was primarily US-based, but travelled and worked and lived in London for a time in the early 1970s; see 'Interview with Kate Haug', in Carolee Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 20-44.

³⁸ The *Dialectics of Liberation* congress was focussed on the 'demystification of human violence' and brought together leading countercultural figures, including lectures by R. D. Laing and Herbert Marcuse, and presentations by Julian Beck (The Living Theater) and Allen Ginsberg. Schneemann, black activist Angela Davis, and poet Susan Sherman were among the few women participants in this male-led event of New Leftism. Kristine Stiles (ed.), *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and her Circle* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 122. *Fuses* was also screened as part of the *Dialectics of Liberation* programme, and Schneemann recalls that she was 'pulled out of the film booth by the conference coordinator who told me that in case of immorality charges, he would not defend me', 'Interview with Kate Haug', p. 27.

³⁹ Michael Kustow, press release 13 June 1968, TGA 955/13/1/4, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁴⁰ *ICA Bulletin*, May-June 1968, TGA 955/14; Press release 13 June 1968, TGA 955/13/1/4, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁴¹ Press release 13 June 1968.

⁴² Carolee Schneemann, 'istory of a Girl Pornographer [1974]', *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (London: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 137-138 (p. 138)

artist's own documentation – particularly a retrospective description of the lecture in the monograph *More than Meat Joy: Performance Works and Selected Writings* - along with reviews and critical texts, we have a fairly full account.⁴³ As the audience were seated, Schneemann passed out oranges from the men's overalls and string vest she was wearing, before taking to the stage to give the lecture. She lectured with a pointer in front of a montage of slides projected from carousels that illustrated her painting, light boxes, and photographs from her kinetic theatre projects, comparing them to works by US and European modernist 'greats' Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, John Marin, Willem de Kooning, and Joan Mitchell.

As part of 'split second stops for questions and answers' with the audience amongst the cascade of images,⁴⁴ Schneemann posed questions, 'can an artist be an art historian? Can an art historian be a naked woman? Does a woman have intellectual authority? Can she have public authority while naked and speaking?'⁴⁵ In a further act of montage, Schneemann undertook the entire lecture while undressing and dressing in and out of the overalls, before asking for two volunteers from the audience to join her in nudity. Schneemann and two 'brave fellows' concluded the performance part of the evening by brushing wallpaper glue onto each other's bodies before leaping into a pile of shredded paper below the stage.⁴⁶ After the artist departed from the space, tarred and feathered with paper, *Fuses* was then screened.

Fuses is a 22-minute silent film that depicts Schneemann's long term, three-year 'action' of having sex with her partner James Tenney on camera, after which the celluloid was then

⁴³ Carolee Schneemann, 'Naked Action Lecture June 27 1968 Institute of Contemporary Art [sic] London', in *More than Meat Joy: Performance Works and Selected Writings*, ed. by Bruce R McPherson (New York: Documentext and McPherson & Company, 1997), pp.180-1.

⁴⁴ Carolee Schneemann, letter to Jan Van der Marck 29 July 1968, in *Correspondence Course*, ed. by Kristine Stiles (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 137-138 (p. 138).

⁴⁵ Schneemann, 'Naked Action Lecture', *More than Meat Joy*, p. 180.

⁴⁶ Carolee Schneemann, letter to Jan Van der Marck 29 July 1968, p. 138.

burned, baked, cut and painted to achieve a partially abstracted, textured aesthetic similar to Auto-Destructive forms.⁴⁷ Schneemann has written of the work (her first project as a self-taught filmmaker) as resulting from desires to pay homage to a relationship, to topple ‘visual and tactile taboos’, and to present a ‘sensuous and equitable interchange’ in which ‘neither lover is “subject” or “object”’.⁴⁸ Domestic scenes of shaky home footage appear, including of Schneemann walking on a beach, views from a window, patterned curtains, and Schneemann’s cat Kitch (who is credited in the opening sequence). These are juxtaposed with intimate and loving bedroom scenes in which areas of the lovers’ naked bodies are zoomed in on to the point of abstraction. We see snatched moments of subdued kissing and touching, Schneemann performing oral sex and Tenney’s erect penis, as well as more energetic full sex, and relaxing in bed. As Kate Haug also commented in 1977, *Fuses* is striking in its beauty:⁴⁹ phantasms of captured moments of tenderness, eroticism, and leisure are caught in flashes of colour, decayed textures, and rich juxtapositions of space and time. In an interview with Haug, Schneemann remarked of the responses it elicited from audiences: ‘it was outrageous and it was sometimes wonderful, salutary for many people’.⁵⁰ While audience reactions were generally mixed in various screenings, according to Schneemann her work was met with a remarkably stony (if not hostile) reception at the ICA.⁵¹ In a letter to Jan Van der Marck on 29 July 1968, Schneemann reported:

⁴⁷ Auto-Destructive art is a type of work, pioneered by the artist Gustav Metzger from the late 1950s, which involves processes of destruction and material disintegration (including works which ‘automatically’ self-destruct because of chemical or other physical components, as well as instances where the artist or participants manually ‘destroy’ or break up the work). Yoko Ono was the only woman to present art work at Metzger’s pivotal *Destruction in Art Symposium* (London, 1966), but Schneemann did participate in subsequent related events. See Kristine Stiles, ‘Synopsis of the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) and Its Theoretical Significance’, *The Act*, 1 (Spring, 1987), 22-31; Kristine Stiles, ‘Survival Ethos and Destruction Art’, *Discourse*, 14.2 (Spring 1992), 74-102 (p. 98).

⁴⁸ Carolee Schneemann, ‘Notes on *Fuses* [1971]’, *Imaging her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (London: MIT Press, 2002), p. 45.

⁴⁹ Schneemann, ‘Interview with Kate Haug’, p. 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵¹ Schneemann, ‘Istory of a Girl Pornographer’, p. 138

My action-lecture at the ICA was a scandal; Michael Kustow was delighted but it made trouble with the old guard for him... and Jasia [Reichardt] was never seen again! 'Fuses' is being used at Royal Prince Albert Festival Hall to test English Censorship laws (passed by Scotland Yard and the Lord High Censor [*sic*]) in a September film program! The man who has organized this is anxious to prepare defense in advance and has asked me to request that people in a position to make a difference write him their opinion of the film – their comments will be published in a booklet and distributed during the showing.⁵²

Adding that, following the *Naked Action Lecture*, 'the discomfort of the audience was palpable!', and that at the end of the evening an 'irate red jowled General with a cane rose from his seat and proclaimed: "Only a demented frigid nymphomaniac could make such a thing!"'⁵³

First and foremost, in both *Naked Action Lecture* and *Fuses* Schneemann poses a challenge to the predominance of female nudes depicted by men throughout the art historical canon. For a woman to present her own naked body in animate, erotic, and potentially unruly ways remained, as Schneemann has commented, taboo in the institutional context.⁵⁴ As Rebecca Schneider points out in her reading of *Fuses*, the artist's position as both subject and object 'complicates habituated reading. Writ(h)ing on this filmic bed is the film-maker herself.'⁵⁵ Schneemann grants "permission to see", and, Schneider says, admits her own act of seeing as subject and object, as she brings Tenney into visibility as subject and object of her active desire.⁵⁶ Schneider draws attention to modes of fluidity, excess, and explicitness expressed in

⁵² Schneemann, letter to Jan Van der Marck, p. 138.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Schneemann, 'Istory of a Girl Pornographer', p. 137.

⁵⁵ Schneider, *The Explicit Body*, p. 74.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 74-5.

the film, such as between the two lovers' bodies, the 'love-fuck' which returns and repeats again and again, and the critical reception of the work as "too much".⁵⁷ Ultimately, Schneider argues,

The film was too much for both the avant-garde establishment with its organizing telos of the male artist and for a fledgling women's movement which conjoined in the general labelling of Schneemann as narcissistic, fearful that her exaltation of her own bodily erotics too closely resembled the general heterosexist, fetishistic delimitation of the woman to her genitalia. Ironically then, in direct relation to Schneemann taking permission to see, the picture was proclaimed hardly able to be seen.⁵⁸

Like the hysterical pose of Louise Bourgeois, Schneemann is seen to double-deal: here, in her tactical occupation of an erotic heterosexual figure, and as 'female nude', in a cultural context in which for a woman to be seen as a sexual object is bound up with assumptions of passivity and subordination to the male gaze. The judgement of the irate General figure in the audience, of Schneemann as a paradoxically 'demented frigid nymphomaniac',⁵⁹ attests to the agitating implications of a woman's representations of her own sexual desire, but also the force of the artist's double-edged manipulations of a feminine sexual position, and self-exposure.

In *Naked Action Lecture*, each element of Schneemann's presentation works towards aesthetics of collage; for example, in the suturing of the feminine and the masculine in the overalls and string vest, and in the relation between her own body and the bodies of the male participants. As Amelia Jones points out in her reading of *Naked Action Lecture*, 'Schneemann's construction of herself *as collage* [...] goes beyond the question of artistic

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 76.

⁵⁹ Schneemann, letter to Jan Van der Marck, p. 138.

agency to the very relationship between the artist's body/self and the way in which this body/self is conflated, through art historical interpretation, with the object-of-art'.⁶⁰ Jones continues:

From a feminist point of view, such a gesture has potentially profound effects: it both interrogates the general process by which art objects are assigned value and, through the very intellectual activity of a naked woman (artist), exposes this process as deeply informed by patriarchal biases. '[T]o use my body as an extension of my painting-constructions,' Schneemann wrote, 'was to challenge and threaten the psychic territorial power lines by which women were admitted to the Art Stud Club, so long as they behaved *enough* like the men, did work clearly in the traditions and pathways hacked out by the men.'⁶¹

While factors of identity *always* impact on judgements of 'value' and interpretation of art works, this becomes most visible where feminine identification collides with established histories of men's work, as a supposedly neutral framework. That conflation of the body or the self of the artist with the art object, described by Jones, is perhaps emblematised by the oranges Schneemann hands out, with their implications of a 'still life' of which her body is also part. While this idea may suggest unhelpful conceptions of essential identity (whereby women are defined by, and limited to, their bodies), Schneemann – conversely – foregrounds the body *as* collage, consisting of changeable and constructed components which can be made use of. In an image of *Naked Action Lecture* published in *More Than Meat Joy*, Schneemann appears as a half bird, harpy-like creature, naked from the waist up, but feathered from the waist down with the scraps of paper (Fig. 5).⁶² She grins out at the audience as a man (who, in contrast, at this point appears clothed in long sleeves) reaches towards her, brushing her with the glue. In

⁶⁰ Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 161.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

⁶² Schneemann, 'Naked Action Lecture', in *More than Meat Joy*, pp. 180-81.

another image of the first part of the lecture, the curved form and shadow of her breast against the string vest contrasts with the folds of her shapeless masculine overall (Fig. 6). Again she is grinning, this time directly into the camera, as she hands out oranges in amongst the seated audience. Both images suggest a dissident comic pleasure in the action, which accusations of the artist's 'narcissism' (as Schneider reported) no doubt seek to contain. Schneemann's invocation of modernist lineages in the lecture is serious in its intellectual appreciation of, and relation to, those 'great' painters, but, as in *Fuses*, this seriousness is simultaneously reshaped by the undermining excesses of her blasphemous feminine pleasure. This gesture is both appreciative and critical, a 'love-fuck', of painterly genealogies. Here, rather than flee sexual positions of femininity, Schneeman harnesses them for their aesthetic and critical potentiality to create associations differently from the patriarchal bonds of the modernist avant-gardes.

While Schneemann's life and work has been the subject of a number of important studies and publications, Charlotte Moorman, another notable visitor to the ICA from the US in 1968, has until recently received less critical and scholarly attention in histories of art. Schneemann and Moorman were friends and worked with each other on a number of projects in New York, from the first *Festival of the Avant-Garde* (1964), for which Schneemann played a pivotal role in encouraging Moorman to realise the potential of her naked body as a visual element in her work for the first time.⁶³ Moorman continued to support Schneemann, including her work as part of the *Festival of the Avant-Garde* from 1965 and through to the 1970s. Moorman, who died of breast cancer in 1991 aged 57, is among the artists and friends memorialised in Schneemann's installation *Mortal Coils* (1994).⁶⁴ While there are a number of articles, chapters, and shorter studies of Moorman's work, it was not until late in the course of researching towards and writing this thesis that Joan Rothfuss published her excellent,

⁶³ Joan Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist: The Improbably Life of Charlotte Moorman* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014), p. 102.

⁶⁴ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body*, p. 323.

comprehensive account of Moorman's life and work, *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman* (2014). Moorman was an artist, curator, and trained cellist born in a small southern town in the US, Little Rock. She studied at the Juilliard School of Music for a year, before going on to play with the American Symphony Orchestra from 1964 to 1966. Concurrently alongside these classical activities, Moorman also established herself as a key figure in intermedia art experiments and activities, and founded her enormously influential *Annual New York Avant-Garde Festival* in 1963. The scope of collaborators and associates grew year on year and included Schneemann and the composer James Tenney, as well as fellow artists Shigeko Kubota, Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Hans Richter, artist-poet Emmett Williams, and 'new music' composers John Cage and David Tudor, amongst many others.

In comparison to Schneemann's, Moorman's work can be located more specifically in relation to intermedia, Fluxus-related practices that were often self-styled as the 'neo-avant-garde'.⁶⁵ While Moorman herself was not part of the international network of Fluxus artists – particularly as Fluxus founder George Maciunas (who was also based in New York) did not approve of her work,⁶⁶ she was nonetheless a part of its wider artistic and social context. For example, in 1964 Moorman met Korean-born artist Nam June Paik (then a Fluxus member) – who was also classically trained as a pianist – after seeking him out (on the composer's instruction) to take part in her production of Karlheinz Stockhausen's musical theatre work

⁶⁵ Intermedia art is a term which emerged in the 1960s, and was used by artist Dick Higgins to describe new art practices which challenged disciplinary distinctions, such as between music, poetry and visual art, for instance by incorporating a variety of media into a single work. Fluxus is a related term which refers to a specific network of artists within the broader category of intermedia art. Fluxus was started by artist George Maciunas and while the group was ostensibly open, membership appears to have been based on Maciunas' and others' approval or acceptance. See Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, 'Intermedia [1965]', *Leonardo*, 34.1 (2001), 49-54.

⁶⁶ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, pp. 88, 124.

Originale (1961) for the second *Annual Festival* in 1964.⁶⁷ Against the wishes of Henry Flynt and peers of Maciunas' Fluxus group who had boycotted the production,⁶⁸ Paik happily agreed to take part (he announced his resignation from Fluxus), and their long-term collaboration was forged.⁶⁹ Her naked and sexually provocative performances with Paik would earn Moorman the moniker 'topless cellist', after she was found guilty of indecent exposure and given a suspended sentence by Judge Milton Shalleck in New York in 1967.⁷⁰ The charge was brought after plainclothes police shut down her performance of a work originally written for Moorman by Paik titled *Opera Sextronique* (1967), at a small cinema space called the Film-Maker's Cinematheque. The work called for Moorman to perform 'topless, then bottomless, and finally completely nude', but she was arrested before the third aria.⁷¹ Topless, but before she had a chance to remove her skirt, she was dragged from the stage by the police amidst chaotic scenes of protesting audiences and a scrum of journalists. Though Rothfuss argues that Moorman herself was 'probably responsible for the leak' which prompted police to arrive at the venue, Moorman did not anticipate that she would be arrested, or that she would be refused permission to dress before being taken into custody, where she spent the night in a cell.⁷² In court, the prosecution characterised *Opera Sextronique* as "a sick publicity stunt",⁷³ but according to the judge's summary Moorman was convicted on the basis that, as Rothfuss says, 'topless cellists could not be artful because [the judge] had never seen one described in classical

⁶⁷ Incidentally, according to Joan Rothfuss, Paik was also pleased with the encounter, having finally found a woman who would consider performing naked. See Joan Rothfuss, 'The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte: A Revisionist History', *Nam June Paik*, ed. by Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert (London: Tate, 2010), pp. 145-68 (p. 146).

⁶⁸ Maciunas and others attempted to boycott the production on the grounds that Stockhausen was considered a 'Cultural Imperialist' and 'Ruling-Class Artist'. See Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (London: University of California Press, 2011), p. 66-9.

⁶⁹ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 124.

⁷⁰ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, pp. 175-205. See also David Bourdon, 'A Letter to Charlotte Moorman', *Art in America*, 88.6 (June 2000), 80-85; 135-137.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁷² Moorman was wearing a skirt, and a coat that *Life* magazine editor David Bourdon had draped over her shoulders as she left; *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

painting, poetry, or prose’, and he added, “[p]erhaps, then, the breast in those milieux is not artful”.⁷⁴ As Moorman’s performance of *Opera Sextronique* was not considered to be art, then, it was presumed to be merely an act of indecency.

Rendering Moorman’s performance as an ‘indecent’ act places it within a set of art and non-art binaries constructed on assumptions of artistic legitimacy, which are frequently bound up with representations of sex. These binaries have been understood by feminist critics as both misleadingly constructed, and insidiously gendered, as Jennifer Doyle has argued persuasively in relation to pornography (as I go on to explain in further detail in the following chapter).⁷⁵ Paik actively pursued ways in which art and sex might overlap, and was outspoken in this aim for a number of years prior to *Opera Sextronique*. For example, in the early 1960s he had written a score for a sexually explicit performance for Alison Knowles – who was at the time the only woman in the Fluxus group.⁷⁶ *Serenade for Alison* (1962), involved Knowles stripping off ‘panties’ of different colours, and discarding them in various ways, leading to a final display of nakedness.⁷⁷ However, Paik was unable to convince Knowles to perform the piece as he as he had written it, as she felt it isolated and foregrounded the ‘femaleness’ of her body, and what she termed the “objectness of woman” in a limiting way.⁷⁸ Indeed, as we have seen in the case of Schneemann, women’s occupation of sexually explicit roles or poses has frequently been used as ammunition against their claims to seriousness. Where men’s representations of nude women are frequently accepted into institutions of artistic activity, women’s presentation of their own live bodies have been considered to be outside of the purview of valid or accepted culture. For instance, while Moorman was charged, Paik was released from custody in the early

⁷⁴ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 201.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Doyle, *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xvii.

⁷⁶ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 88.

⁷⁷ The score for *Serenade for Alison* can be found at TGA 815/2/2/4/163, David Mayor Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁷⁸ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, pp. 88-9.

morning following his arrest. Assumptions of the artistic agency of Paik and Moorman come into question here; where Paik is comparatively sheltered as the legitimated ‘author’ of *Opera Sextronique*, Moorman is assumed to be an interchangeable performer and perpetrator of indecent exposure.⁷⁹ This takes place despite the fact that Moorman was well known as an artist, and had also toured, in Europe in 1965 and 1966, performing intermedia art, Fluxus scores, and related works from around the world. Bitterly and ironically, Moorman is only assumed to be ‘responsible’ when the work is pulled into charges of indecency.

Indeed, beyond the specific context, throughout histories of avant-garde art, women who use their own bodies to express aesthetics or modes of sex or sexuality in their work have been regarded with suspicion. For instance, Amelia Jones describes in *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* how Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (‘the Baroness’) was a pioneering and influential figure in New York Dada circles in the 1910s, who may even have had a hand or influence in creating some of its most famous ‘ready-made’ works such as Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917).⁸⁰ However, in her outlandish style and openness in her sexuality she became the subject of male peers’ ‘lingering sexual conservatism’ and ‘misogynist presentations’ of her as an excessive or tasteless figure.⁸¹ Comparably, Rothfuss has pointed out biases against Moorman and the failures to recognise her artistic agency: ‘Her body was the vehicle for two of [Paik’s] aesthetic experiments: the fusion of classical music with sex, and the humanisation of technology [...] She was a naïf who blindly carried out his instructions, even after doing so got her arrested and convicted of lewd behaviour.’⁸²

⁷⁹ Rothfuss, ‘The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte’, pp. 145-168 (p. 145).

⁸⁰ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (London: MIT Press, 2004), p. 10.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Rothfuss, ‘The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte’, p. 145.

In the autumn of 1968, Paik was exhibiting a number of TV sets and his humanoid *Robot K-456* (created with Japanese artist-engineer Shuya Abe, 1964) as part of the *Cybernetic Serendipity* show (2 August – 20 October) at the ICA.⁸³ This hugely popular exhibition, which showcased various syntheses of art and technology, remains relatively well known today and has been commended as marking a ‘change in thinking’ of major arts institutions towards video art.⁸⁴ During this time, on Monday 23 September 1968, Moorman joined Paik at the gallery to perform their evening of *Avant-Garde Music* in the Nash House auditorium.⁸⁵ The press release described seemingly sensationallly, though accurately, how Moorman was to ‘play dustbins, whistles, balloons, guns, door buzzers, etc.’. The credits for the intermedia programme (billed here as ‘mixed media’) were listed as follows:

ENTRANCE MUSIC...	[George] BRECHT-
	[James] TENNEY
PER ARCO...	GIUSEPPI CHIARI
26.1’1499”...	JOHN CAGE
VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY	
SAINT-SAENS...	NAM JUNE PAIK
SPRINGEN...	HENNIG CHRISTIANSEN
A NEW FILM...	STAN BRAKHAGE
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC...	TAKEHISA KOSUGI
VARIATION No.3...	JOHN CAGE

⁸³ Papers relating to the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity*, TGA 955/7/2/7, Tate archive, London. Paik’s *K-456* is a radio controlled construct which walked, ‘talked’, defecated dried beans, and for a time boasted a penis as well as breasts; see, Wulf Herzogenrath, ‘The Anti-Technological Technology of Nam June Paik’s Robots’, in *Nam June Paik: Video Works 1963-88*, ed. by Gerlinde Gabriel (London: Hayward Gallery, 1988), pp. 6-31 (p. 21).

⁸⁴ Holly Rogers, *Sounding the Gallery: Video and the Rise of Art-Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 138.

⁸⁵ Due to demand, a second late night concert took place the following Saturday; see, ‘Avant-Garde Music at the ICA: First Concert by Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik’, press release 18 September 1968, TGA 955/13/6/16, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

EXIT MUSIC...

BRECHT-TENNEY⁸⁶

Archival evidence suggests that, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the history of Paik and Moorman's previous collaborations detailed above, the evening did not play out in this orderly fashion. An article by Edward Greenfield in the *Guardian* tells us that the event ran late, and in fact the Brecht-Tenney (George Brecht and James Tenney) piece was not played at all because, as Paik told an increasingly restless audience, the tape, which contained a 'sort of feeling of music, rather than actual sound', had been 'left at the BBC.'⁸⁷ Based on Greenfield's account, the first presentation was actually *Instrumental Music*, a score by Japanese artist Takehisa Kosugi, whom Moorman had previously worked with for her *Annual Festivals*,⁸⁸ and had also assisted Paik and Moorman at the raided performance of *Opera Sextronique*.⁸⁹

Moorman usually performed in formal gowns, technological underwear designed for her by Paik such as *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969), or nothing at all. In *Instrumental Music* (also known as *Chamber Music*) she crawled into a large nylon bag with various zippers sewn across its surface, dragging her cello alongside her, and rolled around inside. Video documentation of Moorman performing *Instrumental Music* at Caracas Contemporary Art Museum in 1969, and also another later performance for camera, give us a clearer image of the work (Fig. 7).⁹⁰ Moorman pushes and pulls at the zips from within the bag to reveal her peering

⁸⁶ A second document advertises the second appearance including works by 'JOSEPH BEUYS, GEORGE BRECHT, ROBERT BREER, EARLE BROWN, JOHN CAGE, GIUSEPPI CHIARI, HENNING-CHRISTIANSEN, KEN JACOBS, TAKEHISA KOSUGI, YOKO ONO, JAMES TENNEY AND NAM JUNE PAIK', TGA 955/13/6/16, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

⁸⁷ Edward Greenfield, 'Charlotte Moorman at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, *Guardian*, 24 September 1968, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Moorman's fourth *Annual Festival* (1966) – in which Kosugi performed – was a free event held in Central Park, reportedly seen by 15,000 spectators and passers-by. Hans Richter, Richard Huelsenbeck, Joseph Beuys, Shigeo Kubota, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Bob Watts and Emmett Williams were also among the artists involved. See Bourdon, 'A Letter to Charlotte Moorman', 80-82;

⁸⁹ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 179.

⁹⁰ My use of footage of a different performance is justified on the grounds that my methodology here also reflects the 'infidelity' or 'infidel' feminist strategies which I explained in my introduction and will continue to explore in

eyes, the naked flesh of her leg, the cello's neck, her hair - before zipping up and retreating again into the bag. Later, now out of the bag, Moorman continued with various acts of play in her interpretation of the next score, John Cage's *Variation no. 3*, including replacing her bow with a bunch of flowers, frying eggs, gurgling Coca-Cola, playing a doorbell. Moorman also inserted new elements into the scores, for instance as part of John Cage's *26'1.1499"*, she performed an act conceived of by Paik titled *Human Cello* (1965), for which she discarded her cello to play Paik's naked back instead. Stripped to the waist Paik would kneel and press his face into Moorman's breasts, as she 'slapped, plucked, and bowed' a string stretched across the length of his spine.⁹¹ A projected backdrop of video clips from previous performances ran throughout. For Greenfield, the evening was 'fun', but ultimately characterised by an enduring feeling of 'waiting', never amounting to more than a collection of 'disjointed squibs'.⁹²

In her *Naked Action Lecture*, Schneemann critically intervened into patriarchal conceptions of authorship by putting herself in conversation with Cézanne and other modernist 'greats'. Moorman's performances of scores written by others, in which she presents her own body as a subject and object (here, as a musical instrument), prompt a related but distinct set of questions in relation to histories of avant-gardism, and the more specific notion of artistic *agency*. The conditions of art production within and around the collective milieu of intermedia artists in the 1960s, of which Paik and Moorman were a part, brings into sharp focus increasingly destabilised distinctions between authorship and agency, but also the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic'. The neo-avant-garde practices of these artists consciously echoed those of Dadaists converging particularly around Europe and New York in the 1910s and 1920s. As

the following chapters. Charlotte Moorman, *TV-Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969) and *Chamber Music* (1969) at Caracas Contemporary Art Museum, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5WSoK5_Qao> [accessed 7 December 2015]; excerpt from an unpublished video by Fred Stern, *Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde* (1980), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruSPHwioVI0>> [accessed 28 May 2014].

⁹¹ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 113.

⁹² Greenfield, 'Charlotte Moorman', p. 6.

John Cage famously wrote, ‘One way to write music: study Duchamp’.⁹³ In relation to this, Ina Blom writes of what she calls a ‘tele-touch’, which cuts through time, between early Dada and ‘Neo-Dada’ of the 1960s, and prevents the identification of Dada with any single spatial-temporal location.⁹⁴ Here, Moorman’s appearing and disappearing body in *Instrumental Music* (a score originally written in Japan, and performed around the world) is synthesised with the cello as interchangeable limbs (a foot, a wooden neck) emerge from within the bag. As the body of the cello and the body of the artist move closer and are muddled together, the act seems to echo what Peter Bürger theorised as the project of the historical avant-garde, namely to sublate art into the ‘praxis of life’.⁹⁵ However, as I touched on in Chapter One, Bürger also argues that by the time of the ‘neo-avant-gardes’ of the 1960s this project has now failed: ‘Since now the protest of the avant-garde against art as an institution is accepted *as* art the gesture of protest of the neo-avant-garde becomes inauthentic.’⁹⁶

Bürger’s suggestion of a dichotomy between ‘authentic’ (if ultimately failed) protests of the historical avant-garde and their later, ‘inauthentic’ counterparts mirrors patterns of criticism which diminish Moorman’s artistic agency in comparison to the ‘authentic’ authors whose works she performs. That Moorman’s body has been deemed, as Rothfuss has shown, a ‘vehicle’ for works by others,⁹⁷ is illustrative of wider assumptions that women artists (particularly as ‘performers’) are always indebted to a great male author. Indeed, the trope of the (woman) artist as ‘copyist’ has many historical antecedents. This ‘copyist’ status has held changing meanings and implications at different points in history; for example, as the craze for embroidered ‘copies’ of ‘old master’ paintings played out in the 18th century, women artists

⁹³ Cage cited in Rogers, *Sounding the Gallery*, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Ina Blom, ‘The Touch through Time: Raoul Hausmann, Nam June Paik and the Transmission Technologies of the Avant-Garde’, *Leonardo*, 34.3 (June 2001), 209-215 (pp. 210, 212).

⁹⁵ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 53-4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁹⁷ Rothfuss, ‘The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte’, p. 145.

such as Mary Linwood were initially celebrated in high art circles and academies for their artistry and craftsmanship, but were subsequently challenged in their ‘legitimacy’ as artists, and struggled to escape ‘amateur’ status.⁹⁸ For Moorman, suspicion amongst her peers took place where it was felt that she overshadowed the work at the expense of fidelity to the score, and where she failed to demonstrate the modesty required to foreground the work of the composer (the ‘true’ artist). As Rothfuss details, Moorman’s performances were despised by George Macunias and Fluxus members, Jasper John’s said that Moorman should be ‘kept off the stage’, and John Cage (also sometimes considered a Fluxus artist) ‘came to abhor the way she performed’ his works.⁹⁹ Indeed, his publisher had written to him saying that ‘the best thing that could happen for [Cage], would be that Charlotte Moorman would die’.¹⁰⁰

To return to the image of Moorman’s body-becoming-cello or body-as-instrument in *Instrumental Music*, we can learn more about how agency and ‘authenticity’ have been conceived of historically by comparing it to now-canonical historical antecedents. For example, the image of a woman’s body *as* musical instrument is reminiscent of New York Dadaist Man Ray’s well known photographic depiction of Alice Prin (also known as Kiki de Montparnasse), namely *Le Violon d’Ingres* (1926). In this work, as Kirsten Hoving Powell writes, Man Ray nods to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ neoclassical rendering of a seated female nude in *La Baigneuse Valpinçon* (1808).¹⁰¹ As with Ingres’ bather, Man Ray presents an image of an anonymous woman, naked save for a turban covering her hair; her head is turned as she gazes off into the unseen distance, and the smooth cleft of her full buttocks emerges from sumptuous folds of fabric. In both images there is a smoothing, flattening, and distortion of the woman’s

⁹⁸ Anna Lena Lindberg, ‘Through the Needle’s Eye: Embroidered Pictures on the Threshold of Modernity’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31.4, (Summer, 1998), 503-510 (pp. 507-9).

⁹⁹ Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁰¹ Kirsten Hoving Powell, ‘Le Violon d’Ingres: Man Ray’s Variations on Ingres, Deformation, Desire and de Sade’, *Art History*, 23 (2000), 772-799 (p. 772).

figure as represented by the artists. Man Ray irreverently foregrounds his manipulations, rounding out and smoothing off the woman's body in the photograph with a pencil, and adding in the sound holes of a violin with Indian ink on her back.¹⁰² There is a fantasy at play in both images. The women are represented as objects of male desire or pleasure (a *violon d'Ingres* is a colloquialism meaning hobby). Their bodies are instruments and vessels of the artists' creativity, emblematised in the 'hollowing out' of Kiki's body-as-violin.

As Hoving Powell points out, the title of Man Ray's work is suggestive of a number of things surrounding the central ambiguity between the woman's body as a *homage* to Ingres, and the French usage of the term '*violon d'Ingres*' to refer to a secondary past-time (often that one is bad at).¹⁰³ This has been variously interpreted as expressing Man Ray's heterosexual desire (or, perhaps more specifically, his desire for Kiki), or his wilfully playful, 'not serious', approach to art – or both.¹⁰⁴ Hoving Powell also points out the troubling linguistic proximity to the French word for rape (*violons*), before – perhaps questionably – edging around this to conclude that, primarily, the title is indicative of sets of oppositions, of both 'respect and ridicule', in this 'appropriated' nude.¹⁰⁵ As a canonical figure of tradition, Ingres held a complicated position amongst Dadaists; he was simultaneously influential for his retrospective aesthetic and concern with imagery of the past (thus supporting the various 'primitivisms' of the historical avant-gardes), but was also cited ironically by highly experimental artists.¹⁰⁶ Hoving Powell suggests Man Ray's imitation in *Le Violon d'Ingres* of Ingres' bather 'pays homage to the master, while also deriding the tradition he represents.'¹⁰⁷ She also argues that Ray's

¹⁰² Hoving Powell, 'Le Violon d'Ingres', p. 780.

¹⁰³ This phrase reportedly stems from Ingres' hobby of playing the violin to varying degrees of success. Ibid., p. 772.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Mundy, 'The Art of Friendship', in *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, ed. by Jennifer Mundy (London: Tate, 2008), pp. 8-57 (p. 47).

¹⁰⁵ Hoving Powell, 'Le Violon d'Ingres', p. 772

¹⁰⁶ Notably Francis Picabia; see, Hoving Powell, 'Le Violon d'Ingres', p. 775.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 781.

‘deformation’ of the woman’s body, which appears distorted and limbless, is primarily an attack on classicism, and the ‘classical unity’ of the body, rather than an attack on women’s bodies (as the apparent wordplay on ‘rape’ might suggest).¹⁰⁸

While Hoving Powell’s study suggests a number of ways in which Man Ray’s work might be put to feminist use, or made subject of feminist criticism, it falls short of explicitly addressing ways in which the image operates in terms of its patriarchal functionality – whereby women’s bodies are constructed and manipulated *merely* as instruments. Usefully, Nixon has suggested ways in which modernist avant-garde histories might be exemplified in their frequent deployment of obscene or dirty jokes, in which women’s bodies become anchors for patriarchal bonds between men:

The purpose of obscene jokes, Freud contends, is sexual exposure. An obscene joke is also, according to him, an intimacy shared between men (specifically upper-class men) with reference to an absent woman – a woman whose absence is an essential condition of the joke. [...] As with obscene jokes in general, the woman’s absence from the scene in which pleasure is taken ensures that the men’s enjoyment will not be spoiled, that the object of the joke will not object, will not become a resistant subject.¹⁰⁹

Of course, *Le Violon d’Ingres* cannot be dismissed as merely a dirty joke. As a work of art it does a number of other things – such as making visible the process of artistic production, wryly playing with tradition, cultural seriousness, and hierarchical orderings between (male) artists. However, while the work constitutes a valid expression of Man Ray’s sexuality on one hand, on the other hand the dismemberment, warping, and anonymity of the woman’s vehicular body is also inextricably bound up with other patterns of patriarchal representation and reinforces the

¹⁰⁸ Hoving Powell, ‘Le Violon d’Ingres’, p. 789.

¹⁰⁹ Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*, p. 63.

male author's control over the woman-as-object. As Moorman's body becomes interchangeable and merged with the body of a cello in *Instrumental Music*, this comparison unearths questions surrounding how her act of performing scores, as a kind of 'mouthpiece' of an external artistic authority, relates in continuation of, or in breaking with, the circuitous interconnection of tribute and disparagement illustrated in Man Ray's avant-gardism. Questions of agency, where agency is so startlingly invisible in the women's bodies depicted by Man Ray and Ingres, are brought into particularly sharp focus the popular impressions, explained and critiqued by Rothfuss, that Moorman was merely a vehicle or 'instrument' for realising the visions of 'true' artists (Paik), or worse, a cultural "Harlot" and thief.¹¹⁰ On these terms, where Man Ray is seen as actively 'appropriating' the imagery of another, Moorman merely 'repeats' or plagiarises a kind of authentic original. As a woman, she is thus assumed unable to intervene into masculinist traditions of art and the historical attacks on women's bodies in the canon.

As the patriarchal bonds – accounted for by Nixon – around which avant-garde histories and practices are typically constructed are out of Moorman's reach, her embodiment of a sexual role takes on different connotations. In his *Guardian* account of *Instrumental Music* at the ICA, Greenfield writes:

An occasional clonk of pleasure came from the cello at what Miss Moorman was evidently doing to it, but these were the spontaneous murmurs of love, not recognisable music. The ostentatious unzipping of a zip and the sudden emergence of sensuous lips, of a mass of hair, of a naked foot – these were the 'events' of the piece, superbly surrealistic, but tickling the nerves less and less as one waited.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Rothfuss, 'The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte', p. 145.

¹¹¹ Greenfield, 'Charlotte Moorman', p. 6.

Greenfield characterises Moorman's performance in terms of unseen acts of 'love', and the erotic implications of her joyful (yet serious) writhing around in the bag. The erotic aspects of the performance are also evident in footage of the 1969 performance at Caracas Contemporary Art Museum, in which Moorman's thigh emerges from a zip to straddle the cello-body, 'clonks of pleasure' sounding from within.¹¹² Indeed, in the footage, the contrast between Moorman's white stockings and suspenders and her naked flesh as the fabric of the bag slips further down causes a teenager in the audience to turn away, looking at their friend, shrugging off their embarrassment with a nervous laugh. The corollary implication in Greenfield's account is that Moorman's performance is outside of recognisable (one might as well say 'legitimate') spaces of art. Interestingly, where Greenfield saw 'love', Michael Nyman, who reviewed the performance for the *Spectator*, saw war – of a cello being 'fought' with.¹¹³ On Moorman's work more generally, he writes:

Moorman's cello has surpassed any other instrument, in any era, in the number of uses it has been put to. It is attacked when a recording of aerial bombardment is played; it is fought within a large bag with zippered orifices; it is frozen in a block of ice, and then the ice bowed until it melts and Moorman can get at the cello; Paik's back is bowed as if it were a cello, and the instrument itself it used as a sexual organ.¹¹⁴

Here, Nyman is more generous in crediting Moorman's work for its multiplicity – particularly in that it might represent both love *and* aggression simultaneously; however, Moorman's cello is nonetheless conflated with her own body, defined by its implicitly feminine and essential

¹¹² Moorman, *TV-Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969) and *Chamber Music* (1969) at Caracas Contemporary Art Museum, *ibid.*

¹¹³ Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 88.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

‘sexual organ’. Indeed, the conflation between the curved body of the cello and the body of a woman is at this stage a recognisable cliché.¹¹⁵

As I have said, Hoving Powell argues that in Man Ray’s work the woman’s body is tactically appropriated by the artist from a forefather, drawing on an authentic original to create a new (but nonetheless authentic) work of both *homage* and derision. However, the context of intermedia art of which Moorman is part puts questions of authorship, appropriation, and the ‘authentic’ in a different light. Five years prior to the ICA show, *Instrumental Music*, or at least its semblance, was performed by Takehisa Kosugi in Tokyo at the open entry 15th Yomiuri Independent Exhibition in 1963.¹¹⁶ Kosugi is a Tokyo-based composer, artist, and violinist who pioneered intermedia and Fluxus-related forms both individually and as part of improvisation Group Ongaku [Music Group] in the 1960s and 1970s. In an act titled *Chamber Music/Anima 2*, Kosugi climbed inside a white bag, which he titled *Chieronomy/Instrument*.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Kosugi foregrounded the bag (or ‘instrument’) itself as the art object, though this may have been because the show didn’t recognise performances as admissible fine art entries.¹¹⁸ However, the coherence of *Instrumental Music* as an ‘authentic’ score created by Kosugi, is more difficult than it may first appear. *Chamber Music* was performed simultaneously alongside a piece by Sho Kazakura, *Stuff Comes from Somewhere and Goes Somewhere* (1963), which, according

¹¹⁵ On the cliché of conflations between the body of the cello and the body of the woman, I thank Catherine Laws for her response to my paper, ‘Anecdotal Interventions: Performance Art in 1970s London and Feminist Historiographies’, *Performance, Subjectivity and Experimentation in Artistic Research* seminar, Orpheus Research Centre in Music, Ghent, 25 February 2016.

¹¹⁶ The Yomiuri Independent Exhibition was an annual open entry fine art show with no selection process (although exhibitors were required to pay a fee). It was sponsored by Yomiuri Shimbun Company, a newspaper publishing house, and existed between 1949 and 1963. Faced with increasingly out of control submissions year on year, exhibition organisers at the hosting Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum enacted ‘Standards for Showing Exhibits’ in 1962, which stipulated various rules against unpleasant and dangerous works. The show was suddenly discontinued in 1964 shortly before the 16th exhibition was due to take place. See <<http://aloalo.co.jp/arhistoryjapan/3b.html>> [accessed 19 May 2014].

¹¹⁷ There were two bags submitted to the show, one blue and one white, alongside a third ‘sonic installation’. See William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 173.

¹¹⁸ ‘The Discontinuation of the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition’.

to film and media scholar Julian Ross, consisted of ‘a piece of rope draped from the ceiling and onto the floor (submitted in the category for sculpture)’, with which Kazakura danced, naked from the waist down (Fig. 8).¹¹⁹ Kazakura and Kosugi were frequent collaborators in various groups which often overlapped and metamorphosed into one another, for instance in the Neo-Dada Organisers, and the collective Group Ongaku.¹²⁰ These collectives of changeable members created frameless works and political demonstrations that ran and blurred between and away from one another in the field of what William Marotti calls ‘art activism’ in late 1950s and 1960s Japan.¹²¹ Crucially, both artists had previously been involved in presenting a piece titled *Ritual for Closed Vagina* at a Kyoto screening in which Kazakura, and not Kosugi, first performed inside a bag a year earlier.¹²² These collaborations between groups in Tokyo are also visible in Yoko Ono’s experimentation with similar ideas since 1964 with *Bag Piece* (which involved two people undressing and dressing), and then later with John Lennon and their ‘bagism’ at the end of the decade.¹²³ Thus, the quest for singular authorship and the very notion of an original or ‘authentic’ textual source is destabilised further in the conditions of collectivity and re-enactment in the protean fields of intermedia art. To apply this idea directly to Moorman’s example, this is attested to even by the law which sees her, and not Paik, as responsible for the ‘indecent exposure’ of *Opera Sextronique*. My aim here is not to refute

¹¹⁹ Julian Ross (email correspondence to the author 16 May 2014). William Marotti also offers an account of the event but marginalises the importance of the rope. Marotti claims instead that Kazakura ‘completely dispensed with the artwork itself. His submission was himself’. This seems to sit slightly uncomfortably with other references to submission requirements for the ‘sculpture’ category (to which both Kosugi and Kazakura applied), and Marotti’s own account of the performance being shut down by museum staff on a daily basis. See; Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines*, p. 172. An image of the event is accessible at; William Marotti, ‘Timely and Untimely Politics: Art and Protest in Early 1960s Japan’, <<http://www.soas.ac.uk/wg-beasley/file89425.pdf>> [accessed 19 May 2014].

¹²⁰ An account of the Neo-Dada group and other overlapping collectives of 1960s Japan can be found in Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines*, pp. 173, 187.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²² According to Julian Ross, *Ritual for Closed Vagina* first took place at a screening of *Closed Vagina* (1962), a film made under the collective name Nichidai Eiken (Nihon University Film Studies Club) but led by Masao Adachi, in Kyoto at the Gion Kaikan, May 1962 (email to the author 16 May 2014).

¹²³ Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 98.

Kosugi's claim to authorship of *Instrumental Music* in order to secure authorship for Moorman. Rather, charting the work's history illuminates ways in which historical research must take into account ways in which any iteration at any time confers agency, and the problematics of 'authenticity' as a now highly unstable basis for interpretation.

The frustrated attempt to locate the work's 'origin' reveals the aimlessness of viewing Moorman's event as a recital of a piece that actually 'belongs' to Kosugi (or, even, to Kazakura). Rather, as Moorman takes an active role in shaping the works through her performance, we are confronted with the indeterminacy and negation of 'source' that characterises the global network of intermedia artists in the 1960s. By naming Kosugi 'composer', Moorman points to the expanded sociality of the field, and highlights the conventions of concert practice as objects of play; the formalities constitute an important component of the work, and yet toying with them exposes their rigidity as absurd. Moorman's usage of the term 'concert' had already earned her retribution from an angry public and legal difficulty when used to advertise her first Annual Festival in 1963, as its new music challenged patrons expectations of what a 'concert' would consist of.¹²⁴ Such examples reinforce the idea that she continued to work towards a long-term corollary of sabotaging and renegotiating distinctions between cultural forms. In an interview, Moorman said Kosugi wrote *Instrumental Music* (or *Chamber Music*) for her in 1965; quoting Kosugi she said, 'Music does not aim at sound itself, but is in a complex conception. First, forget about sounds. Sounds must be free.' She adds, 'I think that really says it for the whole movement that I'm involved in, the way we feel about all art forms and

¹²⁴ Ticket holders of *Six Concerts '63*, particularly one woman described by Moorman as a 'little tourist lady', complained to Moorman that to describe such an event as a 'concert' was false advertising, as some of the works did not take the form they were expected by patrons to take (classical-style music). Afterwards, Moorman used the term 'avant-garde', despite not particularly liking the phrase as, she argued, it pointed to a 'future time' rather than an urgent 'present time'. Stephen Varble, 'Interview with Charlotte Moorman on the Avant-Garde Festivals [1973]', in *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University 1958-1972*, ed. by Geoffrey Hendricks (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 173-180 (p.173).

definitions [...] You've got to forget the definition'.¹²⁵ Moorman seems to point here to a kind of freeing and 'expanding' of art, which might be imagined in terms of a linear 'progression' of experimentation, 'moving on' from the old in favour of something new. Her actions, however, can be more accurately theorised along the lines of Schneemann's 'love-fuck', which gestures to a relation that is loving but nonetheless critical – to 'fuck' but also to 'fuck with' – and to wilfully embody a feminine sexual position. In terms of avant-garde histories, what has been developed and reworked over time as modernist tradition is represented but also seems to fall apart – retrospectively reaching for a time 'before' the definition, while necessarily sharing its present existence. In one of Paik's papers (found in the David Mayor Collection at Tate Archive) he asks, 'Why repeat? Repetition is the character of biological existence. More or less.'¹²⁶ The impossibility of birthing new ideas in a world where sounds are forgotten and redundant to music seems to leave only the artistic possibilities of eternal repetition, or self-destruction.

While acknowledging Paik's gesture to the biological, however, this suggestion of repetition is rendered acutely *inorganic* by the disruptive force of Moorman's theatricality. Rather than conceiving of this as a quality which detracts from her seriousness as a highly skilled and faithful interpreter of textual originals, this theatricality actually becomes the very condition around which its avant-garde potential might be defined. Bürger writes:

The organic work of art seeks to make unrecognizable the fact that it has been made.

The opposite holds true for the avant-gardist work: it proclaims itself an artificial construct, an artefact. To this extent, montage may be considered the fundamental

¹²⁵ Stern, *Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde* (1980).

¹²⁶ Nam June Paik, untitled document, folder entitled *Nam June Paik*, TGA 815/2/2/4/163, David Mayor Collection, Tate Archive, London.

principle of avant-gardist art. [...] Paradoxically, the avant-gardist intention to destroy art as an institution is thus realized in the work of art itself.¹²⁷

While it is accurate to point out that Moorman credits work as ‘belonging’ to other composers, she also poses a far more complicated, perhaps irreconcilable, position. It is something other than historicisations of modernist or Dadaist impulses as overturning the ‘traditional’ in favour of the ‘experimental’, which are complex, but ultimately subjugating, and arguably macho, as they play into notions of succession, enlightenment and chronological ‘progress’. I suggest that Moorman’s performance might indeed be exemplary of ways in which the naked woman, the absent object of the joke (to recall Nixon’s point again), becomes a live and resistant subject, but one which makes its attacks in other ways.

A memorable section of the archive footage of a performance of *Instrumental Music* shows the bag, its surfaces pulsating, before Moorman emerges from within, awkwardly mooning her audience, as she exposes only her naked buttocks, which peek out from the bottom of the bag.¹²⁸ Considering this comic gesture, her act can be interpreted as a clear rebuttal to expected social modes of the art-museum-as-temple. Yet, just as her body leaks out from the zippers of the bag, her acts blurring into and away from one another, she also defies this reading in other respects, as well as ‘fixing’ effects of interpretation and categorisation more broadly. Greenfield’s *Guardian* review of an evening at the ICA of wandering ‘fun’, and an odd assortment of ‘disjointed squibs’ is primarily shaped by a perception of Moorman’s excessive and frivolous theatricality, which renders the textual authority of the composer as increasingly impalpable. Yet, while toying with their authority, Moorman also held a profound respect and admiration for her composers, and there remains a deep, seemingly paradoxical seriousness in

¹²⁷ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 72.

¹²⁸ Moorman, *TV-Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969) and *Chamber Music* (1969) at Caracas Contemporary Art Museum, *ibid.*

Moorman's *homage* to Kosugi and her cultural 'forefathers'.¹²⁹ One article claimed she 'worships' Paik, adding '[p]erhaps if she could laugh a little... But no, it is a highly serious event'.¹³⁰ There are many other accounts like it, which are also reinforced by Moorman's own deference. The poster for their 1967 *Opera Sextronique* event, which carried a 'manifesto' written by Paik, sheds further light on the tension between the 'serious' and the 'not serious' in their work:

After three emancipations in twentieth century music (serial, indeterminate, actional) I have found that there is still one more chain to lose. That is **PRE-FREUDIAN HYPOCRISY**. Why is sex a predominant theme in art and literature prohibited **ONLY** in music? How long can New Music afford to be sixty years behind the times and still claim to be serious art? The purge of sex under the excuse of being 'serious' exactly undermines the so-called 'seriousness' of music as a classical art, ranking with literature and painting. Music history needs its D. H. Lawrence, its Sigmund Freud.¹³¹

Moorman completely embraced this concept of sex as key to 'emancipating' music (as a 'classical art'), which Paik had been working towards for some time before their collaborations began (as in his score for Alison Knowles). Whether or not Moorman was considering similar ideas prior to meeting Paik is unknown, partly because, unlike Paik, archive materials (particularly relating to her early practice) have only recently become publically available. However, what is clear is that among the reasons for Moorman's willingness and keenness to perform Paik's sexually suggestive scores, apart from her strong faith in him as an artist, is that, as Schneemann has said, following her first naked performances, Moorman had said quite

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ 'Naked Art Form', *Observer*, September 29 1968, p. 36; Rogers, *Sounding the Gallery*, p. 174.

¹³¹ Nyman, *Experimental Music*, p. 88. Paik considered the lack of sex in music to be a signifier of its being 'behind' other arts and strangled by convention. This was a view shared in different manifestations in the global experimental music scene from the late 1950s, see Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines*, p.181.

simply, it ‘felt wonderful!’¹³² The role of pleasure then, ties Moorman’s performance to Schneemann’s in its blasphemous and dissident comic value, the assumed frivolousness of which is in itself harnessed as a major component of the serious critical achievement of the work.

Like the earlier women artists who were needlework ‘copyists’, Moorman challenged distinctions between high and low art spaces. In an interview Moorman said,

I’m very bored with the concept that art is for a few people – the chosen few. I participate in the activities organized by big museums and big establishment performances, but I have a secret love for reaching people who don’t get to museums or concerts normally. [...] I’m very interested in fun and not making art such a snobbish, mysterious thing.¹³³

Perhaps Greenfield’s bafflement can be explained by an understandable, but ultimately pointless impulse to see the work as a mystery to be solved, to be productive and give an ‘answer’, whereas for Moorman, the key to the work is in the critical and aesthetic possibility of a desiring play. As we have seen, responses to Schneemann’s *Naked Action Lecture*, and Moorman’s performance of *Avant-Garde Music* illuminate common tropes of women as ‘not artists’, as sexual objects, as ‘demented frigid nymphomaniacs’, as naïve, as victims, as mere instruments, or as copyists of ‘great’ men. In their innovations in performance with their unruly and explicit bodies, Schneemann and Moorman subvert these conventional interpretations and lay the groundwork for later practices.¹³⁴ Such acts by women artists harness the political

¹³² Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist*, p. 58.

¹³³ Varble, ‘Interview with Charlotte Moorman’, p. 175.

¹³⁴ To offer one example of a recent work which asks similar questions: Mexican artist Rocío Boliver has designed a musical instrument called a *Pussyphone*, which includes a bicycle tyre pump inserted into her vagina. Boliver has performed musical works with this instrument, for example recently at Queen Mary, University of London (25 November 2015) as part of an *Action Lecture* titled ‘I am a Survivor of Censorship: Between Menopause and Old Age’. The *Action Lectures* are an ongoing series of talks by practicing artists organised by Dominic Johnson.

potential of their own bodies and feminine sexual subject and object positions (from which traditional conceptions of 'seriousness' would bid them to flee) to carry out acts of blasphemy or infidelity to the art-museum-as-temple. I do not interpret them, however, simply as acts of destruction *per se*, but as strategic and critical reconfigurations, as they take profound pleasure in the works of those 'patron saints' with which they engage, even while trashing the temple. Rather than interpreting them as only within a separate space marked 'woman artist', they expose most forcefully the generative ways in which tenets of modernism more broadly might be historicised; for instance, in relation to persisting misnomers of 'authenticity', and the hierarchical orderings of the patrilinear canon.

Chapter Four

Performance and *Prostitution*: The *Magazine Actions* of Cosey Fanni Tutti

Everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people.

COUM Transmissions, *Prostitution*, 1976¹

In *Caprice Issue No. 35*, exhibit number 26 of *Prostitution*, we see a collection of sequentially ordered images with an accompanying text, evidently taken from a magazine, under the heading ‘Water Bed Orgy’.² Frame by frame a sex scene unfolds, beginning with two white, young, slim, naked women on a bed kissing with their eyes closed – one has long brown hair, the other blonde. The blonde woman has thrown her leg over the lap of the other, who grips and pulls back at the upper thigh beneath the buttock, exposing her hairless vulva for the camera. Later, the two women are on their knees, spread wide, face-to-face and pushing each other’s breasts up, which bulge together. Looking down and away from each other, their eyelids are dropped. The dark haired woman’s half-open mouth registers ecstasy. In the following frame, a man has entered the scene; his head is craning into the centre of the shot, tongue extended and pointing towards the vagina, caught with a sidelong glance, of one of the women. She is identifiable only by her dark pubic hair; her face is hidden by the slim hips of another woman (presumably the same blonde woman) bringing herself down over the woman’s waiting, open mouth. Next, the man is gone again and the women are side by side on their backs. Their legs are spread and flung up and over towards their heads, vulvas freely exposed in the

¹ ‘PROSTITUTION’ exhibition publicity poster [*Prostitution*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 19 – 26 October, 1976], *Prostitution* papers, TGA 955/7/7/72, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

² ‘*Caprice Issue No. 35*, exhibit number 26 of *Prostitution* [photocopy]’, TGA 200825, Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

foreground. Their smiling faces (the only smiling faces in the series of images) are in the background – the dark haired woman commands the majority of space. The smiles then disappear as a similar pose is performed, but this time the women spread their labia apart with their fingers, and their heads fall back with closed eyes as they make their offering. Tongues and fingers touch nipples and orifices in various scenes. The man's mouth contorts as he stretches to reach with his tongue, before the final image of the two women, their labia at the centre, stacked one on top of the other. The very top of the dark haired woman's head narrowly comes into view behind the thigh of her blonde partner. The bottom-right corner of this frame is signed 'Cosey Fanni Tutti'.

Caprice Issue No. 35 is one of many *Magazine Actions* by Cosey Fanni Tutti, featuring as the dark haired woman described in the scene above.³ In the *Magazine Actions*, Tutti appears as a model in pornography and glamour publications produced between 1973 and 1977.⁴ In addition to *Caprice Issue No. 35*, *Magazine Action* clippings taken from titles including *Exposure*, *Playbirds*, *Private*, and *Sexpert* formed the central component of the COUM Transmissions 'retrospective' exhibition, *Prostitution*, at the ICA (19 – 26 October, 1976). Spearheaded by Conservative MP Nicholas Fairbairn's now infamous denunciation of COUM as 'the wreckers of civilisation',⁵ the '[p]orn show' prompted media scandal.⁶ Indeed,

³ It is difficult to determine the number of *Magazine Actions* - Tutti's website lists 43 distinct actions, whereas Tate defines them according to their appearance in over 100 pornography and glamour publications. See Cosey Fanni Tutti website, 'Performances, Actions and Broadcasts' <<http://www.coseyfannitutti.com/>> [accessed 19 June 2015]; Tate website, 'Pop Life: Art in a Material World, explore the exhibition, room 10' <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/pop-life-art-material-world/pop-life-art-material-world-explore/po-8>> [accessed 19 June 2015].

⁴ Like COUM Transmissions scholar Simon Ford, I refer to Cosey Fanni Tutti as 'Tutti' throughout, though there is also a precedent for using 'Cosey' in scholarship on her work; for example, see Maria Fusco and Richard Birkett (eds.), *Cosey Complex* (London: Koenig Books, 2012).

⁵ Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation* (London: Black Dog, 1999), pp. 6.19-22. Fairbairn's own moral compass has been exposed to serious public scrutiny many times since *Prostitution*, including allegations that from around 1970 he repeatedly raped a child; see 'Minister raped me, says QC's daughter', *The Times*, 15 August 2014 <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/scotland/article4176635.ece>> [accessed 14 October 2014].

⁶ John Peacock, 'Mr P Orridge in a stir', *Daily Mirror*, 21 October 1976, p. 3.

the status of the exhibition as an ‘infamous’ event continues to contribute greatly to conceptions (or mythologies) of the ICA as a place of radical experimentation in the 1970s and beyond.⁷ In what follows, I give a feminist reading of the *Magazine Actions* and the context of *Prostitution* in order to understand how Tutti’s actions function as art or feminist art, which is connected to specific spatial-temporal sites in history. Moreover, I show how their ontological multiplicity and uncertainty constitute their strength, in their continuing potential for dissent. Using archival research and an interview with the artist, I offer a new account of the *Magazine Actions* exhibition in *Prostitution*, and propose that performance offers a lens through which to examine the ‘troubling’ effect of Tutti’s variously interpreted works, and the fruitful strategies of equivocation she deploys. The extent to which the *Magazine Actions* are conceived of as photographic, documentation of live performances, or long term convergences of art and everyday life – and whether they are contingent on display in art venues – are complex questions which will be explored in this chapter.

In her works of the 1970s, Tutti re-forms representations and politics of sex and sexuality, alongside a number of other women artists emerging and performing interventions into mainstream cultural landscapes. As increasingly collective movements begin to galvanize from the 1960s, this perhaps constitutes one of the most significant innovations of feminist art. Indeed, early performance works by women artists who directly incorporate and critique a feminist analysis of the politics of sex in their work specifically through performance continue to hold positions of inestimable influence on not only feminist art, but wider landscapes of contemporary art and culture more broadly. To offer a few key examples: Yoko Ono illuminated codes of gendered spectatorship and vulnerability by inviting audiences to cut her clothes away from her body with scissors (*Cut Piece*, 1964); Carolee Schneeman troubled

⁷ *Prostitution* is frequently invoked in the ICA’s commemorative or official histories as a key event, most recently as part of their 70th anniversary events; ‘The ICA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary’ <<https://www.ica.org.uk/the-ICA-celebrates-its-70th-Anniversary>> [accessed 8 February 2016].

distinctions between public and private when she filmed herself having sex with her partner (*Fuses*, 1965); by combining her sexual body with formal concert conventions, Charlotte Moorman challenged notions of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art (*Opera Sextronique*, 1967); and VALIE EXPORT anticipated developments in feminist film theory of the 1970s by inviting passers-by in the street to feel her breasts inside a cardboard box she wore, which was modelled in the shape of a proscenium arch (*TAPP und TASTKINO*, 1968). Troubling the dominance of what Griselda Pollock calls the ‘masculine individualism’ of the modernists (including Edouard Manet, Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning), their subversive assertions of agency, particularly sexual agency, disrupt the patriarchal modernist representations of sexuality in which women are mostly reduced to ‘silent’ and static objects or signs.⁸

Later, new sites and modes for developing creative social practices in relation to sex and sexuality were explored as feminist tools of personal-political empowerment for women, for example in the ‘sex-positive’ performances and activism of artist and former sex worker Annie Sprinkle in the 1980s and 1990s. Sprinkle has said that for her Tutti was a source of ‘inspiration’ in both her life and her work, in illuminating new artistic territory where, like Tutti, Sprinkle could draw on her experiences of being a sex worker and performing in pornography as part of her art practice.⁹ While there are various definitions of ‘sex work’ and ‘sex worker’, I use the term in its expanded sense to include workers in all aspects of the sex industry such as those directly selling and carrying out sexual services (‘prostitutes’), performers, models, and workers engaged in the industry in non-direct ways (in facilitating capacities, for example). Unlike Tutti, Sprinkle had previously worked as a ‘prostitute’ earlier in life before moving on to star in pornographic films, while Tutti’s sex work had mostly consisted of posing and

⁸ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 159.

⁹ Interview with Elizabeth M. Stephens, Annie M. Sprinkle and Cosey Fanni Tutti, ‘Post Porn Brunch’, in *Post / Porn / Politics*, ed. by Tim Stüttgen (Berlin: b_books, 2009), pp. 88-123 (p. 90).

simulating sex acts for still photographs in pornographic magazines. Both have, however, also performed sex acts for live audiences. Tutti, for example, had performed anal sex with Genesis P-Orridge, using an art object which also functioned as a double-ended dildo in a performance titled *Filth* at Art Meeting Place in 1974.¹⁰

While Tutti and Sprinkle share some representational strategies as artists, and both have elicited comparable outrage in the mainstream press (for Sprinkle, in relation to an illustrated lecture she gave at the ICA in 1995, which I will return to in the conclusion of this thesis), the form and tone of their art works are also very different. Perhaps the most iconic performance of Sprinkle's is where, as part of her *Post Porn Modernist* and *Post-Post Porn Modernist* (1990-95), a series of touring solo shows written and performed by the artist, audience members were invited to view her cervix through a speculum with a flashlight, in an act entitled *Public Cervix Announcement*. In this work, Sprinkle presents her sexually performing body for a range of socially beneficial reasons centred on pleasure and pleasure-giving, including fun ('fun is really important', she states), to share the beauty of the cervix, and to 'demystify women's bodies'.¹¹ In another work, a 'private performance' (or, Sprinkle says, a performance which does not necessarily require an audience), titled *Metamorphosexual MudBath Ritual* (ca. 1995), Sprinkle gives a script or score inviting 'anyone who is interested' to perform it. The performance centres on an autoerotic ritual bath with scented oils, candles, incense, and mud skin treatment, combined with personal reflections on the performer's own pleasure and sexual pleasure: the text encourages the performer to 'surrender your will to the pleasure and the subtle ecstasy energy in the universe that's available just for the asking'.¹²

¹⁰ See Ford, *Wreckers of Civilization*, p. 4.12; Tutti interviewed in, 'Post Porn Brunch', p. 98.

¹¹ Andrea Juno, 'Annie Sprinkle', *Angry Women*, ed. by Andrea Juno and V. Vale (1991, rpt. New York: RE/Search Publications and Juno Books, 1999), pp. 23-40 (p. 34).

¹² Annie Sprinkle, 'Metamorphosexual MudBath Ritual: A Private Performance', in Annie Sprinkle, *Hardcore from the Heart: The Pleasures, Profits, and Politics of Sex in Performance*, ed. by Gabrielle Cody (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 27-9 (p. 28).

Contrastingly, Tutti's work does not appear to share the ameliorative, positive or therapeutic functions and aesthetics of Sprinkle's work. In a review of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (The Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 4 March – 16 July, 2007), which displayed *Magazine Action* material from *Prostitution*, Carolyn Stuart notes visitors' 'quick walk-through' past Tutti's work, which appeared 'pornographic-looking' and was felt to be 'difficult to consume as art'.¹³ Stuart notes a sense of discomfort in viewers' engagement with – or rather, disengagement from – the work, but also 'a failure to understand the feminism of [the] graphic photos' – adding, an '[e]xplanatory wall text would have been helpful'.¹⁴ Stuart's observations point to a weakness in the curatorial framing of the images, but also a continuing (and perhaps understandable) difficulty for advocates of feminist art to embrace images which appear to be produced in conditions that knowingly and purposefully utilise a woman's body as a sexual object instituted within the binary system of what Judith Butler calls the 'heterosexual matrix'.¹⁵ Within this discursive construct (which has historically been naturalised) desire is established as a 'heterosexual male prerogative',¹⁶ and it accounts for 'all desire for women by subjects of whatever sex or gender as originating in a masculine, heterosexual position. The libido-as-masculine is the source from which all possible sexuality is presumed to come.'¹⁷

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler critiques the psychoanalytic (structuralist) formulation of the 'heterosexual matrix' for its under-acknowledged set of assumptions in historical accounts of desire – both feminist and non-feminist. Writing in the late 1990s, her argument draws attention to ways in which, for example,

¹³ Carolyn Stuart, 'Review: WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution by Cornelia H. Butler; WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution by Lisa Gabrielle Mark', *Signs*, 33:2 (Winter 2008), 475-478 (p. 477).

¹⁴ Carolyn Stuart, 'Review: WACK!', p. 477.

¹⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edition (1999 rpt., New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 47-106.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

1970s discourses around the male gaze and fetishism have been consistently organised around ‘mutually exclusive positions of “having” the Phallus (the position of men) and “being” the Phallus (the paradoxical position of women)’ – which necessarily situate all sexual positions in relation to their augmentation of a masculine subject.¹⁸ Butler’s argument bears relation to (and indeed informs and is part of) clusters of anti-censorship, sex-positive (or anti-anti-pornography), and queer feminisms in that it illuminates ways in which women’s desire has frequently failed to be accounted for outside of this masculine-orientated system. Or, as Linda Williams – a film theorist and pioneer of feminist pornography studies – wrote in the late 1980s, ‘for women, one constant of the history of sexuality has been a failure to imagine their pleasures outside a dominant male economy’, which, Williams argues, has been conceptualised around women’s victimisation, heterosexual male aggression or sadism, and violent weaponisations of the penis and/or male sexuality as a means of control over women.¹⁹

The fact that Tutti’s modelling work was undertaken for reproduction in magazines and films specifically targeted for sexual use by heterosexual male consumers suggests that her images are not only ‘pornographic-looking’, as Stuart euphemistically describes them; they are produced within material conditions that are explicitly grounded in pornography. Interestingly, this interpretive difficulty for feminist commentators persists even while sex work, and sex workers and their rights, for example, are increasingly visible in or as sites of feminist discourse. While significant advances have been made in addressing the stigmatisation, marginalisation, and victimhood bound up with anti-pornography discourses historically, feminist art criticism may still be haunted by the spectre of the ‘porn wars’, which emerged in the feminist movement from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. As Lisa Duggan has explained, these discourses exploded into mainstream political spaces in the US (having developed, Duggan

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹ Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the ‘Frenzy of the Visible’*, 2nd edition (London, Berkeley, and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 4, 5, 23.

argues, from initially more marginal confrontations between anti-pornography feminists and Samois, a lesbian BDSM group in San Francisco), culminating in the form of anti-pornography legislation co-authored by Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon in 1984.²⁰ Resulting accounts of pornography as ‘a unified (patriarchal) discourse with a singular (misogynistic) impact’, which subsumes a wide range of heterogeneous sexually explicit materials, then had a knock-on effect as a contributing factor towards queer and feminist performance artists Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller having their National Endowment for the Arts grants revoked in the 1990s on the grounds that their work was deemed to contain ‘obscene’ content.²¹ Duggan has since been among the feminist scholars to persuasively responded to anti-pornography feminism by arguing ‘that the sexually explicit materials called “pornography” are full of multiple, contradictory, layered and highly contextual meanings’, and strategically drawing focus instead to the vital issues of consent (as socially constructed) and sexist, capitalist economies in which women may choose sex work as ‘not always the worst option’.²² This tension between anti-pornography feminism and other models of feminist representation and interpretation are also the subject of renewed attention in curatorial strategies in contemporary art. For example, Tutti’s *Magazine Actions* have recently been exhibited alongside works by US painters Joan Semmel, Anita Steckel, and Betty Tompkins – who all focussed on explicit representations of sex (particularly heterosexual sex) in the 1970s.²³ The group show, titled *Black Sheep Feminism: The Art of Sexual Politics* (Dallas Contemporary, 17 January – 20 March, 2016), which has drawn mainstream press attention in

²⁰ Lisa Duggan, ‘Introduction’, in *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, ed. by Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, 10th anniversary edition (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-13 (p. 6).

²¹ Ibid., p. 3.

²² Ibid., pp. 6, 8.

²³ Alice Newell-Hanson, ‘The Rebel Feminist Artists of the 70s, Uncensored’, *i-D*, 13 January 2016 <http://i-d.vice.com/en_gb/article/the-rebel-feminist-artists-of-the-70s-uncensored?utm_campaign=idfbuk&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#link_time=1452681699> [accessed 9 February 2016]; Sarah Galo, ‘The Explicitly Sexual Female Artists that Feminism Forgot’, *Guardian*, 3 February 2016, <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/02/porn-magazing-artwork-feminism-dallas-contemporary-exhibit>> [accessed 9 February 2016].

the US but also in the UK, perpetuates enduring perceptions of Tutti as a ‘black sheep’ feminist.²⁴

As a comparative counterpoint, I return briefly to the earlier example of Schneemann’s 1965 ‘love-fuck’ film *Fuses* to further identify ways in which Tutti’s ‘black sheep’ *Magazine Actions* of the 1970s deviate from the tone set by Schneemann’s broadly sex-positive work. As I explained in the previous chapter, in her film Schneemann attempted to document her sex life and represent her own sexuality as imbued with personal agency. Reclaiming her sexual body from objecthood, Schneemann depicted sex with her then-partner as a ‘sensuous and equitable interchange’.²⁵ Schneemann recalls,

After one of the first screenings of *Fuses*, a young woman thanked me for the film. She said she had never looked at her own genitals, never seen another woman’s, that *Fuses* let her feel her own sexual curiosity as something natural, and that she now thought she might begin to experience her own physical integrity in ways she had longed for. That was in 1967.²⁶

This proto sex-positive conception of sexuality (particularly in the context of 1960s ‘free love’) as a means of feminist subject formation works in peculiar ways in relation to Michel Foucault’s notion of prevailing representations of power and desire (in the West), which assume a principle of ‘*the negative relation*’.²⁷ By this logic, there is never ‘any connection between power and sex that is not negative’, and the effects of power in relation to sex are of ‘limit and lack’.²⁸

A complete severance from these representations must take place, Foucault argues, if the

²⁴ Alison M. Gingeras, ‘Black-Sheep Feminist Artists’, *Artnews*, 26 May 2015

<<http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/black-sheep-feminist-artists/>> [accessed 9 February 2016].

²⁵ Carolee Schneemann, ‘Notes on *Fuses* [1971]’, *Imaging her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (London: MIT Press, 2002), p. 45.

²⁶ Schneemann, ‘Notes on *Fuses*’, p. 45.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 83. Emphasis in original.

²⁸ Ibid.

conditions of an adequate analytics of power are to be established, externally of the misleading binary positions of liberation and always-already trapped. In her telling of the work, Schneemann appears to posit sexual realisation as a 'natural' drive towards 'liberation' (affirmed by the account of the woman in the audience): an empty promise in Foucauldian terms. On the other hand, though, the artist also invites a creative and exploratory project of sexuality which is open-ended ('she might begin') and works towards diminishing domination, thus establishing a *process* in which power (and sex) is constructed as mobile and in flux. Schneemann specifies cut-up techniques she uses in *Fuses* to this effect:

There is precise cutting between close-ups of the female and male genitals. I wanted viewers to confront identifications and attitudes toward their own and the other's gender. Perhaps because it was made of her own life by a woman, *Fuses* is both a sensuous and equitable interchange; neither lover is 'subject' or 'object'.²⁹

This and the other cited works of the 1960s are understood as part of a series of cultural shifts, in which the reorganisation of sex, sexual relationships and friendships, campaigns for sexual freedoms, and communal experimentation were emblematic of wider critiques and restructurings of notions of the family, and other state-sanctioned institutions of everyday life.

In the UK context in which Tutti made her work, feminist agitating effected changes in government policies, such as the contraceptive pill becoming available to women on the National Health Service (NHS) in 1961, and the first domestic violence shelter, Chiswick Women's Aid (now Refuge), being opened in England in 1971. Despite these developments, major obstacles remained to be overcome beyond the 1970s, including, astonishingly, the fact that rape within marriage was not considered to be as 'serious' or in the same legal framework

²⁹ Schneemann, 'Notes on *Fuses*', p. 45.

as non-consensual sexual intercourse outside of marriage in England and Wales until 1992.³⁰ In broader historical terms, a line of continuity might be drawn between the personal-political emancipation projects of the 1960s and the consciousness-raising groups of 1970s feminism - indeed, effects and uses of both phenomena continued to reverberate, as Sprinkle's example illustrates. What kinds of representations of power emerge, though, after the 'feel-good' driving forces of 'liberation' arising from the 1960s are depleted? Emerging alongside the quasi-punk aesthetics developed by COUM Transmissions, Tutti's harnessing of sex and sex work in her *Magazine Actions* of the 1970s enables entirely different representations and analytics of sex and power.

Active members of COUM Transmissions at the time of *Prostitution* were listed in the press release:³¹ Peter ('Sleazy') Christopherson, Cosey Fanni Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge (as then known, prior to later changes of gender and name to Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, and the collective identity BREYER P-ORRIDGE).³² The exhibition opening party also marked the formation of the founding industrial band Throbbing Gristle, of which Tutti was also a member. In the exhibition at the ICA, *Magazine Actions* were displayed alongside documentation and artefacts of previous COUM actions and performances,³³ including Tutti's bloodied tampons hanging from a walking stick (other photographic documentation shows P-Orridge performing with the stick in an arts centre in Elephant and Castle, *Through a*

³⁰ Scotland abolished the marital rape exemption in 1989. See Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2008), pp. 327-8.

³¹ 'PROSTITUTION' publicity poster, *Prostitution* papers, TGA 955/7/7/72, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³² For clarity, Genesis P-Orridge, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, and BREYER ORRIDGE are referred to in accordance with the active identity at time of the event or writing in question throughout. For an overview of the transformations of BREYER P-ORRIDGE see Dominic Johnson, 'Positive Surrender: An Interview with BREYER P-ORRIDGE', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), 134-45.

³³ For instance, images of previous COUM performances *Towards Thee Crystal Bowl* (Milan, 1976), *Studio of Lust* (Southampton, 1975), and *Rectum as Inner Space* (London, 1976) were mounted together in a clip frame. See a letter from Cosey Fanni Tutti, 24 January 1997, TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

Tamponstick Darkly, 1974, and Southampton in 1975).³⁴ Another tampon sculpture by P-Orridge, *Venus Mound (From Tampax Romana)*,³⁵ and objects and instruments including a double-ended dildo, a meat cleaver, a rubber suit, hair, Vaseline, and a 'Chain Shower and Box' were also displayed. COUM's statement in the ICA's press release reads, 'This exhibition was prompted as a comment on survival in Britain', and describes Tutti appearing in pornographic magazines as a 'deliberate policy' of action.³⁶ The text continues:

All of these [actions] framed form the core of this exhibition. Different ways of seeing and using Cozey with her consent, produced by people unaware of her reasons, as a woman and an artist, for participating. In that sense, pure views. In like with this all the photo documentation shown was taken, unbidden by COUM by people who decided on their own to photograph our actions.

The document details ways in which the exhibition collects how 'other people' (Tutti's photographers) see and record Tutti's actions (as part of wider COUM actions), before finally adding, 'Everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people'. The opening party (described by COUM in the press release as 'key') included live music from Throbbing Gristle (performing with fake blood, the group consisted of the listed COUM members plus Chris Carter) and the punk band Chelsea (billed as 'LSD'). A stripper named Shelley and a drag queen were hired for entertainment and security services, respectively.³⁷

³⁴ Graham Saunders, 'The Freaks' Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-73', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), 32-45 (p. 44); Genesis P-Orridge (ed.), *Painful but Fabulous: The Lives and Art of Genesis P-Orridge* (New York and London: Soft Skull and Turnaround, 2002), p. 14.

³⁵ *Venus Mound* consists of the head and upper torso of a damaged Venus de Milo model, mounted with plaster, with two wires spreading from the shoulders like wings, from which bloodied tampons hang. It is now in Tate's collection <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/p-orridge-venus-mound-from-tampax-romana-t13863>> [accessed 17 June 2015].

³⁶ *Prostitution* papers, TGA 955/7/7/72, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

³⁷ Cozey Fanni Tutti interviewed in 'Post Porn Brunch', p. 98.

The ensuing scandal in the mainstream media was also represented in a kind of living archive, as reviews were added by the group to a display on the gallery wall across the span of the exhibition.³⁸ As Simon Ford has illustrated, reactions (and indeed, the production) of the show were both constitutive and reflective of ‘moral panic’ (as conceptualised by sociologist Stanley Cohen), enabled by anxieties over economic uncertainty and accumulating threats to established cultural values.³⁹ For instance, as Ford points out, Mary Kelly’s display of – among other works – faecal stains on used nappy liners in *Post-Partum Document* was a contributing factor to media reactions as her exhibition closed at the ICA only three days prior to *Prostitution* opening. Ted Little, the incumbent ICA director, had previously given evidence in defence of COUM member Genesis P-Orridge, who was convicted for sending indecent material in the post.⁴⁰ Little’s support of COUM and *Prostitution* ultimately destabilised his directorship, and jeopardised the ICA’s funding from the Arts Council of Great Britain, as well as (indirectly) the stability of the Arts Council itself as a funding body; Little resigned from the gallery the following year.⁴¹

In *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of COUM Transmissions and Throbbing Gristle*, Ford gives an overview of the media responses to the exhibition, but falls short of any particular depth on how Tutti specifically is represented and received.⁴² Interestingly, a survey of the popular press responses show that Tutti is mostly discussed – if at all – as a ‘girlfriend’, ‘wife’, ‘follower’, side-kick, or incidentally involved as a model in P-Orridge’s ‘sex show’.

³⁸ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, pp. 6.19-22.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Anthony Everitt, ‘Obituaries: Ted Little’, *Guardian*, 12 August 1999 <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/aug/12/guardianobituaries>> [accessed 14 October 2014]. For more information on the trial, see Genesis P-Orridge and COUM Transmissions (eds.), *G.P.O. versus G.P.O: A Chronicle of Mail Art on Trial* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 2002).

⁴¹ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, p. 6.24. See also: ‘Adults only art show angers an MP’, *Daily Mail*, 10 October, 1976, p. 17; ‘Protests at use of public money for Contemporary Arts exhibition’, *The Times*, 22 October 1976, p. 8; Caroline Tisdall, ‘Review: Arts Guardian’, *Guardian*, 22 October 1976, p. 10.

⁴² However, Ford’s research has focussed on Tutti’s practice specifically in his earlier article, Simon Ford, ‘Subject and (sex) Object’, *MAKE*, 80 (June–August 1998), 2-7.

Moreover, her name is variously misspelt as ‘Cozy’, ‘Fanny’, and ‘Tutte’. In the *Daily Express*, the crediting of Tutti as ‘Orridge’s [*sic*] girlfriend Cosey Fanny [*sic*] Tutti, who is featured in some of the pictures’ is particularly characteristic.⁴³ Similarly, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* both fail to mention the collective status of COUM entirely and focus instead on state-supported funding given to P-Orridge, as a ‘[p]orn show producer’ and organiser.⁴⁴ Alongside William Feaver for the *Guardian* (who cites Tutti as COUM’s ‘star’ seeking to ‘exploit’ the ‘exploiters’),⁴⁵ Nicholas Fairbairn, COUM’s most vehement critic, appears among those giving Tutti the most credit for the work – conveniently shifting blame to the ‘prostitute’ woman. This demonstrates some of the ways in which Tutti’s authorship is undermined, except when convenient or corollary to claims of her supposed toxicity.

The Times reported Fairbairn’s questioning of Brynmor John, the Home Office’s Minister of State: ‘[i]s the minister satisfied with the law which allows bodies such as the Arts Council or the British Council to spend taxpayers’ money on sending Cosey Fanni Tutti to take a bath in polythene chips in Milan and exhibitions such as we have in London?’⁴⁶ Fairbairn cites *Prostitution* but also a survey exhibition co-sponsored by the British Council, *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-1976* (Palazzo Reale, Milan, February–May 1976), in which Tutti and P-Orridge had been invited to present by Ted Little (who curated the ‘Performance Art’ section of the show).⁴⁷ In *Towards Thee Crystal Bowl*, they performed dance-like movements and poses, at times hanging from chains, inside a scaffolding structure, and used a ‘bath’ (in a ‘sandbox’ type structure) of plastic chips, having been denied permission both to use a bath of milk (and be

⁴³ Patrick Clancy, ‘Orridge sex show move’, *Daily Express*, 23 October 1976, p. 2.

⁴⁴ John Peacock, ‘Mr P Orridge in a stir’, *Daily Mirror*, 21 October 1976, p. 3; Jack Piler, ‘No more state cash for the ‘porn art’ theatre’, *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1976, p. 3; Shaun Usher, ‘Is he just P. Ractical Joker?’, *Daily Mail*, 21 October 1976, p. 6.

⁴⁵ William Feaver, ‘Hard core confessions’, *Guardian*, 31 October 1976, p. 27.

⁴⁶ [Author unknown] ‘Protests at use of public money for Contemporary Arts exhibition’, *The Times*, 22 October 1976, p. 8.

⁴⁷ *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-76*, exh. cat., British Council / Comune di Milano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1976).

naked).⁴⁸ As recipients of public money to travel to Europe in the past (figures were variously reported but the *Guardian* gives £650.40 for Milan),⁴⁹ Fairbairn's outrage exploded at the news that Tutti and P-Orridge had then received additional funding (reported as £496) to tour the US:

I am writing immediately to the appropriate Government departments to stop all grants of taxpayers' money to the British Council. We're only just getting a look at the maggots in the nest. It is clear these people have been using the excuse and pretence of art to swan around the world undermining values.⁵⁰

That the group, particularly P-Orridge, had received public funding was indeed the source of most complaints. Writing on the third day of the exhibition, journalist Shaun Usher encapsulates the aggressive mood towards experimental arts in his report that '[t]his is a notoriously over-taxed nation, and the joke that some of the £28 million of our money has gone into the Arts Council and been passed on to [*sic*] "Prostitutes," another display involved soiled nappy-liners, and three chaps who walked around East Anglia with poles on their heads, is too cruel to be funny.'⁵¹ As *Art Monthly's* coverage of *Prostitution* pointed out, that public funding featured as a primary complaint was particularly ironic given that the £200 given to the group by the ICA for framing the works was offset by the surge in ICA membership that the exhibition and its reporting prompted.⁵² Questions around the concept of public funding for the arts – or, specifically new practices considered to be at the limit or outside of 'art' – recur

⁴⁸ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, pp. 6.5-8.

⁴⁹ Caroline Tisdall, 'Arts Guardian: Review', *Guardian*, 22 October 1976, p. 10.

⁵⁰ [Author unknown] 'P.Orridge sex-show gets £496 arts grants', *Daily Mail*, 21 October 1976, p. 9.

⁵¹ Usher, 'Is he just P. Ractical Joker?'. Usher refers to the (direct or indirect) public funding towards ICA exhibitions *Prostitution* and *Post-Partum Document*, and the Leeds Polytechnic fine arts graduates Ddart Performance Group (Ray Richards, Dennis de Groot, Tony Emerson) who spent a week walking in Norfolk attached to each other at the head by a wooden pole in February 1976; see John A. Walker, *Art and Outrage: Provocation, Controversy and the Visual Arts* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), pp. 79, 89-92.

⁵² Peter Townsend and Jack Wendler (eds), 'P.Orridge's gruelling days', *Art Monthly*, 2 (November 1976), 1-2 (p. 1).

through the newspaper coverage, where discussion around the form and content of the exhibition works is remarkably absent.

Surprisingly, considering its conservatism, among the newspapers, the *Daily Mail* gives one of the fullest pictures where it reports, ‘Nicholas Fairbairn fought his way through Hell’s Angels and young men with multi-coloured hair, lipstick and nail varnish [...]. Among the “art” was a cage of chains and images of sadism and masochism.’⁵³ COUM as a collective entity, the contributions of Peter ‘Sleazy’ Christopherson, and descriptions of the objects or images are all conspicuously absent, even in Caroline Tisdall’s coverage for the *Guardian* – one of the few sympathetic reviews.⁵⁴ *Art Monthly* reflected that one element of the show, a ‘12-ft.-square sculpture in blue and orange wood’ had been entirely overlooked in the reports and reviews.⁵⁵ While much of the commentary surrounding *Prostitution* centres on the notion of pornographic images being displayed (and presumably seen) in the publically funded gallery, ironically the significance of what is ‘seen’ and not seen is side-lined by ways in which the work, as a total concept and ‘statement’, is publically perceived. In contrast to sensational reports, as in the *Daily Mail*, of scandal and outrage, *Studio International* described the opening party as a ‘depressing evening with mediocre music’, also noting ‘the sad occurrence of a striptease by a rather shocked young girl’ (the aforementioned Shelley), for the ‘crowded and pretentious public occasion’.⁵⁶ A column in the *Sunday Times*, ‘Much Ado About Nothing’, described the exhibition as ‘simulated’.⁵⁷ One possible factor in producing this effect may have been that prior

⁵³ [Author unknown] ‘Adults only art show angers an MP’, *Daily Mail*, 19 October 1976, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Tisdall, ‘Arts Guardian: Review’, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Townsend and Wendler (eds), ‘P.Orridge’s gruelling days’, p. 1. The article is likely referring to the pyramid structure built by COUM in which Tutti and P-Orridge performed *Orange & Blue* (Manzoni Gardens, Birmingham, 1974), which involved swapping roles and ‘cross dressing’ between the artists; TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

⁵⁶ *Studio International*, 193.985, (January/February 1977) [clipping], TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

⁵⁷ [Author unknown] ‘Much Ado About Nothing’, *Sunday Times* [clipping], TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

to the exhibition opening, following talks with the ICA and their leaseholders (The Crown Estate) a decision was made to take the pornographic images off the walls and put them into specially made ‘metal boxes’, with drawers that slide out containing the images.⁵⁸ Patrons were asked to ‘request’ a viewing from a security guard before being shown the images.⁵⁹ Tutti has since commented on the irony (and, for her, pleasure) of the images being ‘returned’ to their original, seedy situation.⁶⁰ By taking the works off the walls and into the monitored metal drawers, the ICA reinforces their categorisation as risqué or possibly dangerous, as visitors view them under the watchful eye of the guard. More recent exhibitions of the *Magazine Action* works have enjoyed a more culturally ‘legitimate’ status, for example in their exhibition at the Tate Triennial (Tate Britain, 1 March–14 May, 2006), where the images were displayed openly on the walls and in glass cases (as in the recent feminist group shows *WACK* and *Black Sheep Feminism* in the US).

Given the sentiments towards public funding for the arts detailed above, it may be reasonably anticipated (if not expected) that, in 1976, an exhibition containing graphic sexual images, clinical waste, and aggressive punk and industrial music less than a kilometre away from Buckingham Palace would prompt scorn in the mainstream media. Furthermore, Tutti has since commented several times on the lack of support she received from other artists at the time: ‘You start off on the fringe. They build you up and you get established. Then they slag you off’.⁶¹ Perhaps most surprisingly, Tutti has faced attack on her artistic practice not only from conservative critics, but also from former collaborators. In response to the Tate Triennial exhibition, which included *Magazine Actions*, she is described by fellow COUM member

⁵⁸ [Author unknown] ‘MP Tears Strip off the Porny Art Show’, *Sun*, 19 October 1976 p. 3; [Author unknown] ‘Mall porn exhibition is disgusting, says Arts [Minister]’, *Evening News*, October 19 1976 [clippings MSL/1995/18, COUM: Throbbing Gristle Archive, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London].

⁵⁹ Pamphlet ‘Prostitution, an exhibition by COUM Transmissions [compiled by David Kinshall, Bristol], TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

⁶⁰ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilization*, p. 6.26.

⁶¹ Tutti cited in ‘Tutti Frutti’, *Guardian*, 20 August 1983, p. 11.

Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, as the ‘supplier’ to work originally conceived of as art solely by the latter, and since ‘appropriated’ by Tutti in an attempt to retrospectively legitimate her unadulterated, irrelevant, or artistically naïve engagement in pornographic modelling.⁶²

Tutti has also represented herself as the subject of what might be called ‘horizontal’ aggression by feminist arts communities.⁶³ Two years after *Prostitution*, art historian Lisa Tickner voiced her scepticism about ‘those who claim an art form out of being “intentionally” exploited like Cosey Fanni Tutti of the COUM Group’, who, Tickner argued, ‘shift the meaning of the work, however serious its original or possible intentions, from parody to titillation’, as the possible political statement collapses into ‘ambiguity and confusion’.⁶⁴ While sympathetic to ‘possible intentions’ for parody and critique of the sex industry, Tickner’s understanding at the time is based on the assumption that Tutti’s work centres on being “intentionally” exploited and that she fails as “intent” (Tickner’s quotation marks signify her doubt), gives way to the reinforcement of unwitting exploitation. In Tickner’s admittedly brief reading, Tutti’s *Magazine Actions* are summarised in the failure to escape ‘titillation’, and the myriad investigations presented by the work into questions of identification, labour, culture industries and value, sex, sexuality, obscenity, shifting ontologies of space and time, and others – some of which I’ll go on to address – are overlooked. While Tickner’s analysis opens up possible avenues for enquiry into how ‘titillation’ (if we accept that as the effect of the *Magazine Actions*) might be harnessed in transformative politics, the basis of the argument could also be seen as complicit with flawed logics, which persist in contemporary commentaries: that people

⁶² Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, ‘Letters: Coum On’, *Art Monthly*, 295, April 2006, 15.

⁶³ Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Cosey Fanni Tutti in Conversation with Andrew Wheatley* (London: The Centre for Useless Splendour / Stanley Picker Gallery, 2009), p. 25.

⁶⁴ Lisa Tickner, ‘The body politic: female sexuality and women artists since 1970 [*Art History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1978]’, reproduced in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970-1985* (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 263-76 (p. 273).

willingly engaged in the sex industry *do not know what they are* really *doing*.⁶⁵ Mutual ambivalence, questioning, or feelings of cynicism between Tutti and feminist communities continued through the 1980s; for instance, a group of feminists reportedly walked out of one of Tutti's later performances, *Opinions* (1985) at Brighton's Zap Club, which according to a reporter, they described as "sexist".⁶⁶

To understand the complex, overlapping distinctions between art and pornography in this instance, I first read Tutti's images 'straight-forwardly' as art objects. Perhaps the most iconic of the images shown in *Prostitution* is that of the press release, captioned *Sexual Transgressions No. 5* (a photograph originally published in a magazine of the same name around 1974). It shows Tutti, reclining on a chaise longue in *odalisque* pose, wearing only sunglasses, a loosely-laced corset, and black stockings and suspenders in hard contrast to her pale skin (Fig. 9). With her long, slender legs relaxing apart, one knee bent and angled outwards, the pubic area and breasts are exposed, and her head cocked towards the viewer with a knowing half-smile. Tutti's portrait echoes an immediately recognisable visual lexicon of 'the whore'. As with Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863), defiance and sexual potency is expressed in the returning gaze of the prostitute-as-artist's-model, and Tutti's image furthers this in its comparatively brazen and impetuous counterpart to the smoothed, rounded and ethereal nudes of the long-stretching art historical canon. However, following on from Lorraine O'Grady's study 'Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity',⁶⁷ Rebecca Schneider argues that Manet returns his *Olympia* as 'comprehensible' (or, ontologically 'fixed') to the art

⁶⁵ Groups such as The English Collective of Prostitutes and Sex Worker Open University regularly campaign for the agency of sex workers and their capacity to consent to be recognised; 'This is what the International Prostitutes Collective stands for', <<http://prostitutescollective.net/1997/03/04/this-is-what-the-international-prostitutes-collective-stands-for/>>; 'Our Manifesto', <<http://www.sexworkeropenuniversity.com/our-manifesto.html>> [accessed 18 May 2015].

⁶⁶ Shelley, 'Opinions: Cosey Fanni Tutti', *New Musical Express*, 19 October 1985, p. 49.

⁶⁷ Lorraine O'Grady, 'Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity' [1992], accessible at <http://www.lorraineogrady.com/sites/default/files/Lorraine-OGGrady_Olympias-Maid-Reclaiming-Black-Female-Subjectivity.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2015].

viewer in the ‘manipulation of the symbolic displacements’ of power; defiance is recapitulated in the counter-erasure of the black woman servant as a subject, the prostitute’s symbolic ‘double’.⁶⁸ In Tutti’s image, comprehensibility is disrupted; eye ‘contact’ is obstructed by the dark sunglasses, there is no (visible) displaced ‘double’, and the text underneath (boldly titled ‘PROSTITUTION’) candidly situates the woman’s body as a commodity ‘for sale’ (*everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people*) – but, most significantly, she is for sale at her own behest as art object but also artist.⁶⁹ There is a simultaneous ‘reality’ or concreteness about the photograph as evidence or outcome of working life in the sex industry (whereas Manet’s *Olympia* suggests an impression), but also an indefiniteness in our ability to ontologically ‘fix’ or identify the ‘limits’ of the image and accompanying text. Is it documentation of a performance, as suggested by its positioning alongside documentation of COUM’s actions? Is it ‘real’ porn (particularly as Ted Little had previously testified that P-Orridge, for one, was not engaged in the production of pornographic material)?⁷⁰ How can it be shown as ‘art’? How might we establish if Tutti ‘knew’ she was either an artist or a porn model at the time of the photograph? It may be tempting (albeit futile) to pursue such questions in search of ontological ‘resolution’. I also contend that the latter three lines of enquiry are loaded with chauvinist logics (*does she know what she is really doing?*).

As ontological ‘fixing’ of the image reaches a dead-end, the examination returns to what we see. The visual language of *Sexual Transgressions No. 5* is clearly informed by machinations of commercial pornography in a specific, historical location of late twentieth century capitalism. The organic nude is disrupted by the bondage of Tutti’s black lingerie, and the suggestive prurience of the dark sunglasses worn indoors (with little else), like a ‘femme fatale’ (dangerous woman), but perhaps also a more sleazy ‘peeping Tom’ (unsavoury man) or other mysterious

⁶⁸ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 28-9.

⁶⁹ *Prostitution* papers, TGA 955/7/7/72, Tate Archive, London.

⁷⁰ Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation*, p. 6.12.

character. The concealed gaze and implied voyeurism, hidden behind the opaque sunglasses, supplement Tutti's ambiguous body language in their bending and blending of the gendered characters represented. The poster image, replicated from its original magazine venue, shows the sexual body as intertwined with industrial technologies (here I also refer to the corset, the sunglasses, the stockings) of commercial pornography, which directly inform the 'sex' or sexiness of the image. This situates the work within the sphere of imagery discussed by Donna Haraway, of the 'fragmentation and reconstitution of bodies', which is bound up with a broader shift away from technologies of reproduction (including reproductive sex), and towards cyborg replication.⁷¹ In 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', Haraway writes,

Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an *it* to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment.⁷²

Haraway's anti-essentialist rebuttal of notions of organic and unitary identities offers, I argue, a generative framework for interpreting *Sexual Transgressions No. 5.*, and the *Magazine Actions* more broadly. Particularly, the argument at the heart of Haraway's manifesto (designed, she

⁷¹ Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century [1985]', in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 149-81 (p. 181).

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

writes, as an ‘ironic political myth’) is that this cyborg body holds feminist potential – if harnessed strategically – for ‘a powerful infidel heteroglossia’.⁷³

Writing in the mid-1980s, Haraway, a socialist feminist and biologist turned historian of science (turned cyborg feminist theorist, a field she pioneered), conceptualised in her manifesto the kind of cyborg body that emerges from capitalist contexts of the late-twentieth century, of new technologies and increasingly leaky distinctions between animal and human, but also animal-human organisms and machines. In part, the polemic refers specifically to the intensification of gendered labours of technology as increasingly economically vulnerable and insecure – and thus, Haraway argues, increasingly feminised. She cites specific examples including Asian women working in factories producing computer chips (where ‘women’s enforced attention to the small [takes] on quite new dimensions’),⁷⁴ and what she describes as the ‘homework economy’ of Silicon Valley.⁷⁵ The latter functions on both unpaid domestic labour, as well as paid, ultra-competitive technological labour, both of which, Haraway argues, involve the erosion of labour rights and security, and seemingly limitless extensions of the working day.⁷⁶ Considered in relation to Tutti’s *Magazine Actions*, these socialist and materialist elements of the manifesto help bring into focus the gendered and technological labours in both sex and art industries, which I will return to later in this chapter. However, importantly, there is also a broader application that can be made of the ‘Cyborg Manifesto’, primarily in its resistance to theoretical, as well as ontological and interpretive, *totality*. Specifically, Haraway writes in resistance to ‘totalizing tendencies’ of previous and ongoing iterations of feminism, which have been unable to address the damage done by white, universalising assumptions of natural identities; ‘women’s experience’ as a singular category; and coherent feminist discourses

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 149, 180.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 154.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 166

⁷⁶ Ibid.

based on ‘unity’, which may unwittingly rely on logics of marginalisation, incorporation, or domination – as well as unhelpful ‘taxonomic identification’.⁷⁷

Interestingly, while Haraway’s manifesto is expressly utopian in its aims, and is geared towards ‘imagining a world without gender’ in a ‘postmodernist and non-naturalist mode’, an industrial (or postindustrial), militaristic and dystopian vision is also evident – and is complemented by histories and myths of monstrous hybrid creatures.⁷⁸ Indeed, Haraway acknowledges this seeming contradiction: ‘The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins.’⁷⁹ Here, Haraway’s infidel mode allows for recognition and feminist use of the material conditions, experiences, and representational patterns produced within patriarchal capitalism, while also undermining the naturalised myths from which they stem in their reimagination. Preceding later key feminist theories, such as José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of disidentification, this approach foregrounds ‘partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity’ as transformative identificatory strategies in response to gendered conceptions of natural ‘innocence’, and victimhood.⁸⁰

Haraway’s deployment of ‘partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves’ enables a greater understanding of Tutti’s process;⁸¹ the artist has previously commented on her *Magazine Actions* as stemming from a desire to bring her own image into the ‘cut and paste’ collage and mail art works she was already creating with images of other women from commercial pornography.⁸² Rather than using other people’s bodies from

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 156-7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 151.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 157.

⁸² Cosey Fanni Tutti, ‘Sound & Vision: Cosey Fanni Tutti’, *Tateshots* interview, 28 January 2010 <<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/sound-vision-cosey-fanni-tutti>> [accessed 17 November 2014].

existing magazines, Tutti sought to make the work more ‘complete’ by going out into the sex industry and making the images herself, before recuperating and returning them to her collage and mail art. This approach involves the performing of a character, propelling oneself into a situation as a ‘persona’, and with ulterior motives unknown to those who would otherwise populate the infiltrated area. In interview Tutti herself stated, ‘I was “being a model” in order to realise the end work’.⁸³ This is echoed in the resulting reproductions of sex industry conventions, where models enact (or are ascribed) titillating alter-egos; Tutti appears as characters including ‘Slippery Millie: Piccadilly’s Oily Lilly’, ‘Nanette’ the ‘girl next door’, ‘Tessa from Sunderland’, and ‘The Office Cleaner’.⁸⁴ Considered in this light, Tutti’s presentation of her composite (technologically constructed) and hyper-sexualised body as art presents an innovative contribution to discourses on appropriation, intertextuality, identity and social constructionism emerging through and beyond the 1970s.

In Tutti’s re-presentation of predictable, tacky (bordering on absurd) sexual personas such as ‘The Office Cleaner’, it might be assumed that the artist seeks to satirise and criticise - or is merely complicit with - an industry based on uses of women’s bodies as (cheap) sexual ‘products’. In *The Office Cleaner*,⁸⁵ Tutti is perched and poised naked on the edge of an office table, with a clunky type-writer and drab reproduction of a floral still-life painting in a tiny frame on the wall in the background (Fig. 10). She hugs at her knee, pulling it up against her breast which is hidden, her vulva is exposed and she looks into the camera with a hint of a coy smile. Glimpses of tufts of public hair contrast with the smooth skin of her long, slim leg, and her foot extends elegantly downwards as the tip of her toe is poised on the horizontal plane of her other

⁸³ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author via email, 3 November 2014.

⁸⁴ Images reproduced in Maria Fusco and Richard Birkett (eds), *Cosey Complex* (London: Koenig Books, 2012), pp. 23, 66, 138, 87.

⁸⁵ This image is reproduced in Fusco and Birkett (eds.), *Cosey Complex*, p. 87. I use *The Office Cleaner* title to make it clear which singular *Magazine Action* I refer to here; however, the publication does not give a formal title or date for this particular work (which appears to be a common problem for discussing specific *Magazine Actions*).

thigh – which rests on the table. Tutti's ambiguous body language invites intrigue on at least two levels: firstly, on the question of her supposed availability, as she is concealing while also exhibiting herself; and secondly, in that as she pulls her knee towards her breast, her slim but strong-looking bicep is pushed up against her leg. This gives an appearance of strength, but it also looks as though she hugs herself – a notable characteristic when considered within a historical context in which women asserting their sexual agency are frequently dismissed with accusations of narcissism. However, the intrigue of the image then jars with the trite, sexist text of the caption: 'Not all office cleaners are middle aged Mops. Some firms hire quite young and beautiful girls to work early evening cleaning offices out. Linda is such a girl...' In another work, Tutti appears as 'Geraldine' in a huge, camp, curly, and obviously fake blonde wig and heavy blue eye-shadow extending up to her eyebrows, an almost comic fiction complemented by an elaborate backstory in the accompanying text, which includes glamorous travels around the world as a nightclub dancer (Fig. 11). Appearing and disappearing elements of disruptive comic irony are thus experienced when reading these images at the crossroads between sexist cultures of their original commercial pornography venues, and the critical space of their art exhibition.

Haraway's infidel mode offers a means of appreciating the way in which Tutti's images work here, where she clarifies the cyborg body's particular form of 'blasphemy', which 'protects one from the moral majority within, while still insisting on the need for community'.⁸⁶ Haraway delineates the way in which blasphemy (as opposed to apostasy) allows for (perhaps disidentificatory) critiques of feminism, socialism, and materialism, while simultaneously still maintaining contingent allegiances to them. Tutti's images, then, are blasphemous to spaces of both art and commercial pornography, without entirely functioning *only* to subvert them. First making herself available to be 'seen and used' (as the press release puts it) by unwitting participants, Tutti then undermines that 'usage' and position of vulnerability in her display of

⁸⁶ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', p. 149.

the material as art, revealing a long-term project by which the pornographers and consumers all become labourers (in the sense that they are unwittingly embroiled in public outrage, ‘victims’) of the artist’s vision – when the ‘product’ becomes the creator. Indeed, after *Prostitution*’s wide media coverage, Tutti’s ‘cover was blown’, and she was ‘blacklisted’ by various model agencies, photographers and magazine editors.⁸⁷ Tutti elaborates, ‘[t]he sex industry then was based on “using” girls and a great deal of manipulation, so for a girl to “use” them wasn’t well received at all.’⁸⁸ In this sense, the feminism of the *Magazine Actions* (in response to Carolyn Stuart’s question) could easily be located as part of a central drive of feminist arts movements in the 1970s in seeking to re/claim the agency of women (and as artists). As Tutti puts it:

[I]f I hadn’t put myself in that position, wanting to subsequently reclaim authorship for myself... to get it I had to let them have authorship at the beginning. So that’s what interested me most of all, [...] the relinquishing of control and then the grabbing it back again at the end. Especially when they thought they had won.⁸⁹

Intervening into the sex industry, Tutti appropriates its commercially-driven and predictable images and products, while also working from within. Similar tactics were prevalent in works by conceptual photographers in the UK in the mid-1970s; as feminist artist Margaret Harrison recalls, commercial imagery, particularly advertising, was a ‘dominant theme’ at the time.⁹⁰ Images both drawn from, and commenting on, commerce and capital, as well as fields of work (domestic and industrial) were central to influential London-based practices, such as that of Jo Spence and the Hackney Flashers Women’s Photography Collective (of which Spence was a co-founding member). The Hackney Flashers’ *Who’s Holding the Baby?* (1978)

⁸⁷ Tutti, *Cosey Fanni Tutti in Conversation with Andrew Wheatley*, p. 37.

⁸⁸ Tutti, interview with the author.

⁸⁹ Tutti, *Cosey Fanni Tutti in Conversation with Andrew Wheatley*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ Margaret Harrison, ‘Harrison, Margaret, ‘Feminist Issues in Contemporary Art – Margaret Harrison in conversation with Lucy Lippard [recorded 1978]’, *Audio Arts*, 4.1 [audio], produced by Willian Furlong.

juxtaposed images from advertisements with their ‘documentary’ photography, sometimes performed specifically for the camera, of women’s childcare and domestic labour, and overlaid with text, such as ‘If all women went on strike, our society would grind to a halt.’⁹¹ The Hackney Flashers socialist and ‘documentary’ sensibilities were also shared by influential men working in conceptual photography fields, such as Victor Burgin. Burgin’s *UK 76* (1976) series of 11 photographic works overlaid with text (‘photo-texts’) draws, again, from visual languages of advertising and commercial magazines. Burgin was invested in leftist representations of social realities of life in the market-driven, capitalist economy in the 1970s. For example, scenes of the working class everyday are juxtaposed with text which direct or re-direct the viewer’s perception of the image, as in one *UK 76* work which depicts a grim and grey suburban landscape, centred around a looming electricity pylon and its overhead wires, overlaid with a poetic textual depiction of an exotic utopia (‘Turquoise waters. Total immersion. Ecstasy’), concluding with ‘TODAY IS THE TOMORROW YOU WERE PROMISED YESTERDAY’.⁹² While Burgin’s acts of appropriation were acknowledged for their anti-capitalist direction (whereas Tutti’s are less typically so), their critical effects were not dissimilar to Tutti’s *Magazine Actions* in that they often held a position of ambivalence, with an ironic distance from commercial imagery and industry on the one hand, but also not entirely eschewing its artistic, aesthetic, or subjective possibilities on the other.

Similarly, from around 1972 feminist artist Alexis Hunter had been appropriating aesthetics of advertising in her photography as a deliberate ‘political strategy’, while – like Jo Spence – also working in commercial film and photography to sustain her art practice.⁹³ Hunter

⁹¹ Jo Spence, ‘Hackney Flashers’ <http://www.jospence.org/hackney_flashers/hackney_flashers_thumbs.html> [accessed 7 December 2015]; see also John A. Walker, *Left Shift*, p. 244.

⁹² Victor Burgin, *UK 76*, Arts Council Collection <<http://www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk/artwork/uk-76>> [accessed 7 December 2015].

⁹³ Alexis Hunter, interview with the author via email, 20 February 2014. Correspondence with Hunter was brief and disjointed, as in her later stages of experiencing motor neurone disease she could no longer speak, and found

was born in New Zealand but was based in London from 1972 until the time of her death in 2014. She had joined the Women's Workshop of the Artists' Union, and was influenced by meeting other feminist artists including Harrison, Mary Kelly, and Tina Keane in London,⁹⁴ as well as other influential international artists May Stevens and Nancy Spero.⁹⁵ She was also active in co-curating open submission exhibitions at the Women's Arts Alliance, where she held her own first UK solo show, *Feminist Perceptions* in 1977, after which she was invited by Sarah Kent to exhibit her *Approaches to Fear* series at the ICA (1978). In her work *The Model's Revenge* (1974), a series of photographs of the body of a naked woman (we cannot see her face) progress sequentially: the barrel of a gun is focussed at the centre of the photograph, as it points directly at the camera, with a woman clutching it between her breasts in the background; next, she holds the gun sideways over her pubic area, with finger on the trigger, and finally, her hand, still clutching the gun, rests on a bed of ruffled white sheets, contrasting with the hard metal.⁹⁶ While the images are focussed on particular areas of the body, and never show the face, for Hunter it was an important strategy in the context of feminist practices that she herself posed as model; Hunter reflects, '[it] was OK if you used your own body [in art], just not someone else's'.⁹⁷ The exposed woman artist with gun recalls VALIE EXPORT's earlier *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969) photographic self-portraits, where the artist poses in a crotchless outfit in provocative and 'guerilla warfare' style.⁹⁸ In *The Model's Revenge*, however,

typing physically difficult. Sadly, Hunter died four days after her last email to me; Lynda Morris, 'Alexis Hunter Obituary', *Guardian*, 11 March <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/11/alexis-hunter>> [accessed 7 December 2015].

⁹⁴ Morris, 'Alexis Hunter Obituary'.

⁹⁵ Alexis Hunter, interview with the author.

⁹⁶ Images reproduced in Lynda Morris (ed.), *Alexis Hunter: Radical Feminism in the 1970s*, exh. cat. (Norwich: Norwich Gallery, 2006).

⁹⁷ Alexis Hunter, interview with the author. A reproduction of a sketch which shows Hunter's method for photographing her own hands (which involved pulling on a string with her teeth to release the shutter) can be found in *Alexis Hunter: Fears / Dreams / Desires*, exh. cat. [Auckland City Art Gallery 21 July – 3 September 1989] (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1989).

⁹⁸ VALIE EXPORT, 'Action Pants: Genital Panic (1969)' <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/export-action-pants-genital-panic-p79233>> [accessed 7 December 2015].

as with Rose Finn-Kelcey's *Restless Image*, qualities of high fashion photography are more distinctly evident in the monochrome prints - particularly in the luxuriousness of the bedsheets, and a single ring worn by Hunter (on her little finger, this opal-style crystal ring also appears in other works, which often focus on hands). The feminist politics of *The Model's Revenge* are overt; the controlling dynamic of the male gaze is disrupted by the model's threat and radical call to arms. In this respect, Lucy Lippard argues that Hunter 'used a narrative, commercial-looking style because she hoped through its very banality to make her work accessible', producing greater political effect.⁹⁹ However, Hunter also allows for a pleasure to be taken in the images, and she was interested in 'auto-eroticism and hands touching the advertiser's product in order to give it a tactile reality'.¹⁰⁰ As Lippard also pointed out, there is an actively pursued '[f]etishism and a hint of S&M' underlying Hunter's works of the 1970s,¹⁰¹ which complicate boundaries between expressions of sexual warfare on the one hand, and sexual desire on the other. For instance, in the *Approaches to Fear* (1975-78) series, her manicured hands smear oil over an image of a greased naked man's chest, becoming more voracious in their movement before setting the photograph alight; her hands grip at oily and greasy engine parts, with fingers penetrating into pipes; in another, her pink nail polish shows through the oil as her hands rest on her jeans over her crotch; a silver high heel is caressed before being set alight, and in *Approaches to Fear II* she slices into her fingernails with a razor blade.

As in the work of Hunter and the Hackney Flashers, Tutti's works also make a significant contribution to developments in conceptual photography, where images and aesthetics which are commercial in their origin are appropriated, framed, and displayed sequentially to form narratives (they are performances for the camera). Recently, Tutti's works

⁹⁹ Lucy Lippard, 'Hands On', in *Alexis Hunter: Photographic Narrative Sequences*, exh. cat. pp. i-iii (p. i).

¹⁰⁰ Alexis Hunter cited in 'Alexis Hunter: *Approaches to Fear* publicity statement', TGA 955/7/8/164, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁰¹ Lippard, 'Hands On', p. ii.

have been considered by scholars and curators for their position within conceptual art frameworks; for example, Siona Wilson has related *Prostitution* more closely to Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* than previous accounts.¹⁰² Overall, however, Tutti's contribution to these areas remains under-acknowledged. Furthermore, they must be considered in relation to their emanating directly from working class experiences and concerns, intersecting and agitating with art practice. Understanding Tutti's *Magazine Actions* as sophisticated interventions of appropriation and as 'reclaiming' embodied subjecthood makes them fairly comprehensible as subjects of interpretation. This critical framework also functions in moving towards a resolution of the difficult bind between Tutti's account of her work, and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge's counterclaim of an unjustifiable 'mythology' surrounding the *Magazine Actions*, for example.¹⁰³ However, Tutti never quite allows her audience to sit comfortably at this conclusion. Alongside her motivation for working towards a more 'complete' process of making art, Tutti also asserts her 'genuine curiosity for the sexual experience' gained as a sex worker.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, Tutti has said that she moved into the sex industry more or less 'by accident, as often happens when women seem to be good objects for the male gaze [*laughs*]'.¹⁰⁵ Tutti's laughter here strikes me as particularly emblematic of the 'problem' of interpreting her attitude, between sarcastic derision on the one hand, and a knowing admission and utilisation of the status quo on the other; similarly, she writes in the mid-1990s that '[o]ne tends to convince oneself of all manner of things to justify ones [*sic*] participation in the acts of sex being photographed, filmed or portrayed on stage.'¹⁰⁶ Curiosity and cash were also motivations for continuing with work that

¹⁰² Siona Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 136.

¹⁰³ Breyer P-Orridge, 'Letters: Coum On', p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Tutti, 'Sound & Vision: Cosey Fanni Tutti'.

¹⁰⁵ Tutti, 'Post Porn Brunch', p. 96.

¹⁰⁶ Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Time To Tell* (London: Conspiracy International, 1994), pp. 2-3 [X940210, Special Collections, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London].

was at times ‘boring or even disgusting’, but also entailed highly sexually charged moments and occasionally off-camera affairs.¹⁰⁷

In January 1976 P-Orridge wrote a letter to *Vile*, outlining plans for a new LP tape called *DRY BLOOD TAMPAX* and an ‘alien rock’ record label, Insipid Records, adding,

Cosey has been countinuing [*sic*] her Prostitution Actions to support our coum actions. Thee Arts Council have stopped our grant midway, say we are inaccessible (and obscene)... And what is nicest is we never act. Only problem is money and time. Now we are really underground again, finance is harder, we survive by prostitution in every form. [But] that’s integral to our way of death anyway.¹⁰⁸

Contradicting the more recent letter to *Art Monthly*, which claimed that Tutti was ‘appalled’ that her sex work had been revealed through P-Orridge’s collating the material for *Prostitution*,¹⁰⁹ the portrayal of Tutti’s magazine work as self-contained ‘Prostitution Actions’ – and as actions which also directly supported COUM – also takes on particular significance when considered alongside the fact that public funding for the group was the most reoccurring complaint against them in the exhibition’s press. Indeed, to echo *Prostitution*’s press release, it is apt for the group to represent Tutti’s engagement in the sex industry as, among other things, a means of survival in the context of economic ‘crisis’, as everyone – and here the artist, in particular – is for sale; this dovetails with the neoliberal ideologies that would soon flourish in the UK after 1979, under the auspices of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government. Indeed, Julia Bryan-Wilson has interpreted Tutti’s works within the historical framework of sex workers and artists seeking (generally independently, but in parallel) recognition of their labour

¹⁰⁷ Tutti, *Cosey Fanni Tutti in Conversation with Andrew Wheatley*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Genesis P-Orridge cited in Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilization*, p. 6.4. P-Orridge deliberately reconfigures words to include COUM’s name in his idiosyncratic style of writing at this time.

¹⁰⁹ Breyer P-Orridge, ‘Letters: Coum On’, p. 15.

and unionisation in the 1960s and 1970s, in the midst of a ‘post-industrialist’ shift towards immaterial and (gendered) affective labour. She writes,

The prostitute, like the performance artist who generates no saleable object, is a figure of ambiguous exchange who encapsulates the instability of the commodity object and the uncertainty of forms of worthwhile labor, ones that have been converted (or evaporated) into pure exchange value. One might speculate that in the 1970s, women artists – particularly those who were making artwork with their bodies – identified with prostitutes because performance and sex work are analogously affective and precarious practices.¹¹⁰

While Bryan-Wilson does not draw directly on Haraway’s ‘Cyborg Manifesto’ this interpretation reinforces the relevance of Haraway’s socialist-feminist application for understanding the *Magazine Actions*. Where *Prostitution* was ‘prompted as a comment on survival in Britain’, as the press release tells us, Tutti suggests that the artist always ‘sells’ herself in the increasingly professionalised, ‘incestuous institutional system that prevailed’ in the art world of the 1970s, as she perceives it.¹¹¹ However, questions of whether the woman, artist, or prostitute can, in fact, be bought remain (though such questions cannot be fully addressed here, they must continue to be asked).

As I have established, Tutti’s reasons for entering into the industry are complex and tangled – as is the case for the heterogeneous communities of sex workers generally.¹¹² Tutti has never (to my knowledge) claimed that her art practice legitimised otherwise ‘illegitimate’ sex work; rather, she describes colleagues sharing an assertiveness and knowingness about their

¹¹⁰ Julia Bryan-Wilson, ‘Dirty Commerce: Art Work and Sex Work since the 1970s’, *differences*, 23.2 (2012), 71-112 (p. 85).

¹¹¹ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹¹² Joanna Brewis and Stephen Linstead, *Sex, Work and Sex Work: Eroticizing Organisation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 189

position and readership.¹¹³ The knotty temporality of the work, then, is brought into sharp focus if we entertain a conception of her art work and sex work as materially distinct (as Genesis Breyer P-Orridge suggests retrospectively). Considering the sex work as ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ (indeed, there is no reason why it shouldn’t be), there is a supposed ontological delay in the artwork fully coming into being, inasmuch as anything can, only years later, when labelled and displayed as such. This temporally peculiar aspect to the work makes it particularly relevant for performance studies, where the images themselves are troubled as static or total objects; they are documents of an ongoing art-life project or performance, but also ontologically unfold in travelling through space-time, functioning differently in different spaces (the art gallery, the sex shop, or the home). To borrow from queer theory, the strangeness of time and space at work here recalls Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn’s notion that ‘sex’ and ‘queer’ could be ‘fully conceived as activities and processes, rather than objects or impulses, as movements rather than identities, as lines more than locations, as motions of making rather than as forms of expression.’¹¹⁴ While the pornographic images Tutti creates with her body and its technologies appear to reinforce tired (perhaps damaging) representations of the patriarchal structure of the heterosexual matrix, there is also a defamiliarisation at play in the temporally-disrupted interpretability of the photograph. Probyn elaborates further on ‘the pervasiveness of images; the problem of realizing, interrupting, shifting, skewering their direction. For if all matter is image, and the body as image compels and receives the movement of other images, all is not chaotic flux.’¹¹⁵ Considered alongside Tutti’s troubling of her images through their ontological uncertainty, there is a sense in which out of the seeming ‘disorder’ of the un-locatable artwork emerges an important process and system in which the body reveals its potential, not only for

¹¹³ Tutti has commented on sex worker colleagues’ knowingness and justified disdain for their readers; *Cosey Fanni Tutti in Conversation with Andrew Wheatley*, p. 24

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, ‘Introduction’, *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Grosz and Probyn (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. ix-xv (p. x).

¹¹⁵ Elspeth Probyn, ‘Queer Belongings: The Politics of Departure’, in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Grosz and Probyn, pp. 1-18 (p. 13).

disrupting the static image, but also for challenging and changing notions of representations as corollaries of a fixed reality. In the artist's own words, 'The pleasure is in the response, the response is where the political possibilities lie.'¹¹⁶ Tutti's attempt to reorganise the limits of art and performance produces plays of claims and counter-claims, invoking the heterosexual matrix while also troubling it. Attempts, as seen in the media coverage, to re-fix her body as a 'prostitute' body, produce yet more questions about the work, and propel its epistemological peripateticism.

While borrowing from queer theory here to analyse Tutti's *Magazine Actions*, it must also be said that for the most part there is nothing particularly queer – or even unusual – about the type of pornography she appears in. The images are mostly softcore depictions with Tutti still wearing clothes or underwear, but vary to include some more hardcore photographs of splayed genitalia and penetrative sex acts (which, to the reader, may be real or simulated). One lesbian scene, *Private 44 Oral Sex Orgy (Lesbian Special)* (exhibit number 30 of *Prostitution*, itemised in the exhibition's opening night price list at £600),¹¹⁷ shows Tutti on all fours as another femme woman with a similar young, slim, white body sits on top of her facing the other way, arching and throwing her head back as she grips and spreads Tutti's buttocks for the camera, as if in preparation for the concluding entrance of an implicitly phallic viewer.¹¹⁸ The work holds consistency with (regulatory) representations of feminine bodies in commercial pornography (including their youth, their slimness, their whiteness, their long-hair, their pert breasts, and so on), and as one woman dominates another by sitting on her back, making Tutti's genitals visible to the viewer while not actually touching them herself, it may also be said to bear some relation to the historical stereotypes of heterosexual pornography, outlined by

¹¹⁶ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹¹⁷ 'PROSTITUTION: The Opening Monday 18 October 1976 ICA Price List', TGA 200825, Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

¹¹⁸ '*Private 44 Oral Sex Orgy (Lesbian Special)*, exhibit number 30 of *Prostitution* [photocopy]', TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

Linda Williams, organised around ‘male, phallic “hardness” and aggression’.¹¹⁹ While none of these semiotic conventions necessarily preclude it from lesbian or queer usage or status, and a counter-argument might be made as to what pleasures of the women are evidenced, *Private* is nonetheless targeted at heterosexual men, with any possible queer consumption taking place incidentally, beyond the immediate anticipated sites of production.

Though some works, such as the one reproduced for the *Prostitution* poster, *Sexual Transgressions no. 5*, I argue are more obvious in their bending and mingling modes of sexual expression hitherto instituted within a heterosexual binary, in other cases their criticality is more vexed – particularly as Tutti’s *Magazine Actions* do not typically depart from the customary poses and tropes of mass manufactured, ostensibly heterosexual, largely male-produced porn. There are more obvious exceptions to this; for instance, in more visually unusual modelling work with a (now deceased) photographer known as Szabo. In interview, Tutti has reflected on the sessions with Szabo as ‘pleasurable’ on an ‘aesthetic level’, adding, ‘[w]e were both outsiders in the sex industry and likeminded too’.¹²⁰ The images reproduced in *Time to Tell* (an artist’s book and CD, 1994) to accompany Tutti’s dedication to the photographer pay particular attention to shadow or chiaroscuro, fetish iconography, and the *jouissance* of ‘bedroom dress up’ in ways that depart from typical commercial pornography (which more commonly opt for a flat, strong light for maximum visibility, for example).¹²¹ Similarly, in 1994 Tutti created *Lip Service*, a series of ‘close-up’ images (printed in black and white monochrome) of her labia and anus, trussed with a carefully arranged steel chain, which is strikingly comparable in aesthetic formalism to Robert Mapplethorpe’s photography depicting BDSM practices (the most famous example of this being *Self Portrait with Bullwhip*, 1978). These examples show particularly forcefully that Tutti pushes and bends at the

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Hard Core*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹²¹ Tutti, *Time To Tell*.

boundaries of ‘porn’ and ‘art’, and toys with their ontological elasticity. However, as with the reception of Mapplethorpe’s work historically, a problem arises in this double movement between porn and art, whereby art discourse may be implicitly assumed as salvation from, or legitimisation of, difficult representations of sex.

As Tutti works within male-oriented commercial pornography, the sex element does indeed require critical attention. For example, while the ‘characters’ or the spurious fictional scenario attached to the images changes between magazines, familiar visions of implied submissiveness reverberate. We see a woman on all fours, with an arched back, her head thrown back in a routinely mundane look of ‘ecstasy’, breasts pushed together, labia spread apart, eyes vacantly half closed and mouth hanging open – the images lose distinctiveness in the echo of their familiar expression. This homogeneity and depersonalisation process is particularly evident in relation to an example from *Playbirds* magazine, which shows images of four women modelling the same pose with slight variation together in a grid of four squares. Here, I am not arguing that there is nothing interesting or artistic about the images; rather, I am suggesting that they defy the ‘autonomous’ art object in pointing most profoundly to ways in which images can only be understood in relation to context: they make visible the intertextual existence of art objects. For example, the sequentiality and repetition of the *Magazine Actions* affirm their place in the context of conceptual art, while also retaining the tropes that they reveal or even parody. Indeed, these tropes are central to Tutti’s intervention into conceptual art as a historically male-focussed space which more frequently actively excludes explicit representations (particularly women’s representations) of sex and sexual bodies.

Tutti’s exhibition of the images, then, invites readings which extend beyond their use-function as sexual aids or aids for masturbation, for example in foregrounding the material structure of pornography production as an economy largely based on images of young, slim, able-bodied white women appearing to happily perform their roles of available, sexually

functional and energetic service-providers. This prevalent categorisation of women's labour is seemingly reaffirmed to some extent by the *Magazine Actions*' images whose fictions are predicated on men's superiority in an economic hierarchy; for example, I might point again to *The Office Cleaner*, or *Sexy Confessions of a Shop Assistant Vol. 1 No. 9*, in which women are tenuously grouped together as 'customer service workers'. However, in framing and exhibiting the *Magazine Actions* together, a project which investigates and produces both knowledge and power becomes more visible to the viewer – as Tutti's introductory statement for the exhibition explains:

As yet I have met no one [in the industry] who has seen the commercial sex world as I have, or who would care to admit it. They seem so busy keeping their games to their related roles that they are blind to the truly, strange, complicated, ironic situation they are in. The public see[s] the whole scene as rather mysterious and/or sordid. The producers say it is not so. It is sordid. (You lick me and I'll lick you). It has a magic all its own and can only succeed the way it is.¹²²

While I query Tutti's curiously conservative suggestion that the sex industry 'can only succeed the way it is', particularly in the light of later work by women sex workers, artists and activists, such as Sprinkle, it is also clear that her work, as research, refers to a very specific, historically located social-cultural-political context. In her performances of the epistemologically divergent woman-artist-prostitute, and in drawing attention to popular perceptions of the mystified and 'sordid' mechanisations of sexuality in the 1970s, Tutti resists the temptation to secure the readability of the images as morally or aesthetically 'bad' (or indeed 'good'). Fixing Tutti as 'prostitute' is no longer possible; her status as a sex worker fails to capture or consume her, where this assumption is often made of sex workers in other 'straight-forward' or non-art

¹²² 'Performance Art / COUM Transmissions 19-26 Oct', ICA booklet Oct/Dec 1976, TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.

contexts. Rather, Tutti troubles familiar and totalising narratives by utilising her multiple, changeable, fragmentary body in performance, at the centre of the ‘magic’, to disrupt the dominant unitary principles of identity, which understandably, and importantly, featured profoundly in feminist projects at that time, as women attempted to re/claim their own expression. Like Haraway in her ‘Cyborg Manifesto’, Tutti strategically cultivates a chimerical borderline here between and of both mythic imaginaries (the late twentieth century is a ‘mythic time’, Haraway writes) and social realities – and she takes pleasure in their increasingly smudged and dissolving boundaries.¹²³

The troubling and disruption of forms and genres (which in Tutti’s example, includes those within art as well as outside of art) has been frequently noted as a characteristic of feminist performance art in the 1970s. For example, Sally Potter’s 1976 *Studio International* interview, as I explained in Chapter Two, describes women turning to performance as ‘an anti-specialist area’, where ‘cross references’ might take place, between and outside of existing traditions which women have less ‘vested interest’ in preserving.¹²⁴ With this framework in mind, performance can be considered significant to understanding Tutti’s *Magazine Actions* as interventions, particularly as they began to appear in, and alter, ‘high art’ spaces. Further insight into the strange ‘magic’ of commercial pornography described by Tutti (noted in the previous paragraph) can be gained by referring to Genesis P-Orridge and Peter ‘Sleazy’ Christopherson’s ‘Annihilating Reality’, a COUM ‘manifesto’ authored shortly prior to *Prostitution* and published in *Studio International*:

Heresy: Art is too often a pale reflection of what already exists. Especially performance art. The pictures in tit magazines are negated in content by repetition. They serve

¹²³ Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’, pp. 149-50.

¹²⁴ Sally Potter, interviewed by Marc Chaimowicz, ‘Women and Performance in the UK’, *Studio International*, July/August 1976, 33-35 (p. 33).

however an incantatory function. Magic. Cosey Fanni Tutti in her action 1973-76, *Prostitution*, discovered the owners of these magazines need them as much as the customers they despise.¹²⁵

Here, Tutti – the only other ‘active’ member of COUM at the time – is named and credited for her *Magazine Actions* (which, as I have noted, P-Orridge’s contradicts in a later statement), but she is also peculiarly absent from the manifesto as an author. This seems notable, particularly in the context of feminist artists in the preceding decade such as Schneemann, Moorman and EXPORT taking up voice and space as key tactics in their enactments of agency and subversions of modernist conventions of the silent woman. Tutti, however, has recently argued that ‘spoken language can be a barrier’, and a ‘clumsy’ form of expression in the context of her work, choosing instead to employ other means (which may be more difficult to classify and under-recognised – even by collaborators) of intervening in and via mixed gender groupings.¹²⁶ It is also arguable that Tutti’s absence from the manifesto intensifies her role, here as ‘magician’, at the centre of COUM’s ‘retrospective’.

So how, then, does Tutti perform her ‘magic’? Her rehearsal of pervasive ‘tit magazine’ poses and imagery seems to comment both on the ‘negation’ of their impact as individual images, but also their pornographic ‘usefulness’ and demonstration of fetish patterns and fetishistic representations of sex. The repetition of bodies materialising as part of established moulds (of pose, character, and so on) is conceptually astute in its revealing of an everyday ‘ordinariness’ about the images’ similarities, but also ‘magic’ in their obsessive, ritualistic invocation. The article goes on to give the example of a man (at ‘Premier Camera Club’) who creates a book of years of photographs in which different women appear in the same pose and

¹²⁵ Genesis P-Orridge and Peter Christopherson, ‘Annihilating Reality’, *Studio International*, 192.982 (July/August 1976), 44-48 (p. 45).

¹²⁶ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

underwear, '[i]f this were framed and mounted in rows in one of our minimal galleries, with a fashionable artist's name given as its creator, would that make it acceptable to you? Is the photographer then an artist? Is the model an artist? If the artist chooses to be the model is it then art?'¹²⁷ These are fascinating provocations by P-Orridge and Christopherson, particularly in relation to Tutti's *Magazine Actions* as a critique of constructions of what constitutes 'art' and an 'artist' as both gendered and class-based. The performing, collecting and exhibiting of the porn images in the gallery is not, here, a 'pale reflection' of already-existing phenomena. Rather, the obsessive, ritualistic invocations amplify the redundancy of the binary dualism whereby the repetition and recycling of poses and roles in the art institution is assumed different to the fetishistic consumption and production habits of the sex industry.

The logic – identified and critiqued by Jennifer Doyle – which assumes pornography and art to be 'mutually exclusive opposites' is refused by the *Magazine Actions*,¹²⁸ as the images function as both art and pornography in dialectic tension in the process of Tutti's work. This is apt for a project which, according to P-Orridge, 'began as a satire of pomposity in the art world, especially in the conceptual art world at that time', as audiences seeking to preserve an imagined binary opposition of art and porn (in not accepting the work as part of art, as the media coverage demonstrates) inescapably become complicit in creating the sleaze that they seek to refuse.¹²⁹ In her book *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* Doyle approaches pornography and art as not opposites but ('more nearly', Doyle adds) 'overlapping representational modes, in which one is a possibility always contained within the category of the other'.¹³⁰ Notably, she discusses a range of historically located examples, including those from the more established art historical canon (such as the painting and sexually explicit teaching

¹²⁷ P-Orridge and Christopherson, 'Annihilating Reality', p. 45.

¹²⁸ Jennifer Doyle, *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xvii.

¹²⁹ Breyer P-Orridge, 'Letters: Coum On', p. 15.

¹³⁰ Doyle, *Sex Objects*, p. xvii.

practices of Thomas Eakins) as well as contemporary performance practices at institutional margins (such as those of black genderqueer artist Vaginal Davis). Whereas sex in art has habitually imagined the sexual body as a naturalised, 'passive, feminine vehicle for the beautiful and the sublime', Doyle attends instead to the 'everydayness of sexual subjectivity: the wanderings of desire, the importance of boredom, desire's haptic dimension, the stubborn and delicate nature of our attachments to each other, the seductive power of misunderstanding, and the inevitability of sexual failure and humiliation'.¹³¹ For example, Doyle discusses in detail a performance by Vaginal Davis at a queer burlesque evening titled 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Care' in Los Angeles in 2011, which culminated in a "real live marine" (an erotic fiction) entering the stage, whereupon a 'failed' sex act or encounter takes place.¹³² The 'marine' was directed to ejaculate into the audience but, as Doyle says, he 'failed to work up an erection', even with the help of other performers.¹³³ Through this example and others, Doyle shows how when art represents sex or becomes a form of sex (and vice versa) it takes on other dimensions; it may become boring, obsessive, failed, powerful, or critical, for instance. In this way it seems to respond to Linda Williams, Lisa Duggan, and others' calls from the 1980s and 1990s to acknowledge sexually explicit materials in their specificity and – to quote Duggan again – their 'multiple, contradictory, layered and highly contextual meanings'.¹³⁴

To refocus on the way in which the *Magazine Actions* might be interpreted as or via performance, in their *Studio International* manifesto P-Orridge and Christopherson refer to the potential and political efficacy of mail art to infiltrate 'mass media and systems', as a type of 'subliminal performance art'.¹³⁵ In addressing the process of the production of the *Magazine*

¹³¹ Ibid., p. xxi.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 125-8. In this performance, Davis performs as a parody of Vanessa Beecroft, and parodies Beecroft's 'corporate friendly' works in which U.S. Navy SEALs stand in uniform in silent formation (as in *VB42*, 2000).

¹³³ Ibid., p. 125.

¹³⁴ Duggan, 'Introduction', p. 6.

¹³⁵ P-Orridge and Christopherson, 'Annihilating Reality', p. 46.

Actions in and of itself as a kind of ‘subliminal performance art’, it must be said that while COUM and its members were described in various instances as performance artists, Tutti has rejected this categorisation on the grounds that performance is too closely associated with theatricality and entertainment – opting instead for the term action art.¹³⁶ While Tutti now reflects on the *Magazine Actions* as differentiated from her other works by their performance qualities (including, for example, her performances of alter-egos),¹³⁷ this tentativeness towards, or criticism of, ‘performance’ as an art category, particularly in the 1970s, is not uncommon; for example, in 1975 Stuart Brisley and Leslie Haslam developed their ‘Anti Performance Art’ in retaliation to ‘performance’ as an inadequate category found pervasively within every other mode of art-making.¹³⁸ For Brisley and Haslam, ‘performance’ denoted ‘a general theatrical condition’ felt to be ‘inappropriate’ or tangential to visual arts, as such categorisation didn’t allow for performance as a direct challenge to ‘decadent and seemingly apolitical artistic habits’ associated with the professionalisation, specialisation, and marketisation of painting and sculpture.¹³⁹ However, I would argue that in fact it is distinctly through performance tactics that Tutti is able to offer her provocative commentary on sex work and art work as on a continuum, with specific *and* shared systems of sexual structures and dynamics in fields of work and professional life.

At the most pragmatic level, what funding COUM did achieve from the Arts Council of Great Britain situated them, first, alongside experimental theatre groups under the rubric of the Experimental Projects Committee, and then as ‘performance art’ from 1974 – suggesting,

¹³⁶ Cosey Fanni Tutti cited in Simon Ford, ‘Subject and (sex) Object’, *MAKE*, 80 (June – August 1998), 2-7 (p. 4).

¹³⁷ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹³⁸ Stuart Brisley and Leslie Haslam, ‘Brisley / Haslam: Anti Performance Art’, *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-76*, exh. cat., British Council / Comune di Milano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1976), pp. 416-417 (p. 416).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

therefore, the centrality of ‘performance art’ to understandings of *Prostitution* in 1976.¹⁴⁰ That it is ‘hard to explain performance work adequately in a few words’, as COUM wrote that same year, is a difficulty that Graham Saunders and Dominic Johnson have both pointed out as aggravating shortfalls in funding and institutional representation for Live Art and its prehistories such as performance art.¹⁴¹ This ‘hard to explain’ quality, however, also gestures to COUM’s use of performance as a challenge to the notion of the fixed, total or ‘complete’ art work. This is reinforced in that there is no single discernible ‘aim’ to the work or single position taken by the group in regard to it. As with the heterogeneous fragments of objects and events that make up *Prostitution* at the ICA (documents, sculptures, the opening party, the press), efforts to resolve the contradictions and complications of the work are frustrated by sustained refusals of unitary logics, evident in both the form and content of *Prostitution*.

In arguing that performance is a key tactic which allows for the complex critique and political possibilities of the work, some of which are identified in this chapter, I contend, then, that the disruptive possibilities (cultural, social, political) proposed by the work are not located only in the *Magazine Action* images, but in the performance of their production and presentation at the ICA. There are certainly limitations to this analysis; as Ted Little wrote in the same year, the proliferation of performance documentation in commercial gallery spaces might also be said, to some extent, to ‘return’ challenges presented by live interventions to the capitalist art market (a now-familiar critique which recent theorists of performance have since contested).¹⁴² Furthermore, there is the difficulty in understanding Tutti’s work, which might

¹⁴⁰ Graham Saunders, ‘The Freaks’ Roll Call: Live Art and the Arts Council, 1968-73’, pp. 42-44; for a list of COUM’s grants up to 1976 see ‘Awards etc.’, COUM / Throbbing Gristle archive, Harley Lond papers 1974-1980, MSL/1995/18, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

¹⁴¹ See Saunders, ‘The Freaks’ Roll Call’, p. 38; and Dominic Johnson, ‘Marginalia: Towards a Historiography of Live Art’, *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK*, ed. by Dominic Johnson (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 13-30 (p. 16).

¹⁴² Ted Little, ‘Performance Art’, in *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-76*, exh. cat., British Council / Comune di Milano (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1976), pp. 408-413 (p. 411).

readily be re-cast as ‘confusion’ (as Tickner posited).¹⁴³ Tutti refuses to either joyfully celebrate the body and its sexual potential, as sex-positive artist-activists like Sprinkle might, or to condemn exactly the field of pornographic representation in which Tutti is involved (and reminds us of our own involvement). While Tutti has commented on deeply unpleasant aspects of working in the sex industry, she also maintains a suggestion that rather than there simply being pleasure on the one hand, and pain or discomfort on the other, there is also a third area at play in the *Magazine Actions*, where sexual pleasure and discomfort meet and exist simultaneously. This is also played out in uses of fake blood and wound imagery in other performances such as *Woman’s Roll* (A.I.R. Gallery, London, 1976), and her three-day action at the Hayward Annual (1979), in which crushed strawberries are used to create the illusion of cuts on Tutti’s body as she moves around carefully placed arrangements of small objects in balletic and erotic ways. As Tutti recalls, ‘[t]he juxtaposition of the evocative aroma of strawberries and the gashes on my body created a sense-response clash.’¹⁴⁴ This ‘clash’ might be thought of as bringing Tutti’s work uncomfortably close to historically pervasive representations of the sexualities of women as dominated by death drives, from the customary slashings of bare breasts in 1970s exploitation horror, to the leading women characters doomed to madness or suicide in the plays of nineteenth-century Naturalism, and beyond.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, there is no ‘satisfaction’ from this indefatigable, shifting, technological notion of sex in the wake of exhausted 1960s ‘free love’. Rather, Tutti’s batting around of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ interplays does not allow us to fix limits, but demands an open-ended model of interpretation for work which foregrounds the continually evolving nature of art as dialogically

¹⁴³ Tickner, ‘The Body Politic’, p. 273.

¹⁴⁴ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹⁴⁵ The possible relationships between sex, sexuality, and death or death drives requires exploration beyond the scope of this article. For studies of visual, cinematic and literary representations of women and women’s sexualities as death drives in history see; Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

dependent on shifting, social experiences of space and time. Tutti's *Magazine Actions* and their exhibition in *Prostitution* then, present an investigation, remarkably for the time, that models more recent theories of identification (as a more pluralistic and mobile modification of fixed 'identity'), as well as understandings of sex and power, which move beyond the binary of oppression/liberation. For instance, links can be drawn with later feminist and queer projects, such as that of Grosz and Probyn, of 'making queer all sexualities, about what is fundamentally weird and strange about all bodies, all carnalities'.¹⁴⁶ In a queer feminist durational mode (to refer again to Amelia Jones' concept), we can think of the *Magazine Actions* in relation to recent feminist projects which have accounted for queer subjectivities as involving sexual practices of sexual and gender minorities, but also – crucially – broader application as political practice. As Doyle, drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, has also said, this may include heterosexual relations, but relations which refuse, intervene into, or trouble monolithic structures of the heterosexual matrix; investing instead in sites where 'meanings do not "line up tidily with each other"'.¹⁴⁷ Some recent accounts of *Prostitution* have characterised the *Magazine Actions* in terms of a queer aesthetic that deepens a disjuncture from feminism; for example, Siona Wilson argues that '[while] *Prostitution* does indeed mobilize feminist codes, it does so to stage a queer aesthetic: not homosexuality as an identity or a generalized post-1960s idea of camp, but the mutual containment of gender and genre'.¹⁴⁸ While Wilson emphasises a degree of separation between feminist and queer projects (characterised here as a shift away from questions of women towards questions of gender), I argue that the conjoined queer and feminist elements work together in enhancing the efficacy of their shared intervention (the manner in which Wilson conflates queer and camp is also questionable).

¹⁴⁶ Grosz and Probyn, 'Introduction', p. xi.

¹⁴⁷ Doyle, *Sex Objects*, p. xxxi.

¹⁴⁸ Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics*, p. 95.

As a reader looking back, making connections and forging dialogues between *Prostitution*, Tutti's *Magazine Actions* of the 1970s, and contemporary feminisms and understandings of art, identities, sex, sexualities and their histories, I am struck by how the questions Tutti poses continue to hold resonance – and challenge feminist and other readers. Tutti has commented: 'I "speak" to people in a conversational way, to create a dialogue, not to make a statement. A statement is too final, it closes down communication rather than opening it up.'¹⁴⁹ Indeed, there is a danger in seeking certain kinds of semiotic resolution, which may have unintended consequences of diluting, sanitising or 'legitimizing' a work, or a political sensibility. Tutti's enactment of the woman-artist-prostitute demonstrates the particular feminist potential offered by performance for an 'infidel heteroglossia'.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Cosey Fanni Tutti, interview with the author.

¹⁵⁰ Haraway, p. 181.

Chapter Five

‘Other Crusaders’

One of the key debates at intersections of art and performance in scholarship and practice since the turn of the twenty-first century centres on notions of participation, which have prompted a social turn in these and related fields. British art historian and critic Claire Bishop has been among those driving the debate, particularly in her critique of particular types of socially engaged art and surrounding critical literatures, and advocacy of a ‘relational antagonism’.¹ In her article ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’ (2004), Bishop sets out a critical context for types of socially engaged art (termed relational art):

Rather than a discrete, portable, autonomous work of art that transcends its context, relational art is entirely beholden to the contingencies of its environment and audience. Moreover, this audience is envisaged as a community: rather than a one-to-one relationship between work of art and viewer, relational art sets up situations in which viewers are not just addressed as a collective, social entity, but are actually given the wherewithal to create a community, however temporary or utopian this may be.²

Bishop then responds to critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud’s critical contribution to the field, and advocacy of what he terms ‘relational aesthetics’, in which – as Bourriaud writes – ‘art [takes] as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context’.³ In her article, Bishop then critiques the types of works celebrated by Bourriaud, including those by British artist Liam Gillick and New York-based Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. Bishop argues

¹ Claire Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, *October*, 110 (Fall 2004), 51-79 (p. 77).

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002), p. 14.

that their practices, as emblematic of Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics', over-emphasise ethical and use values of social engagement in art, which then limits their aesthetic and political efficacy. She suggests that these artists reach for 'feel-good positions' and social relationships which are harmonious, and fail to critically reflect on the shift towards an 'experience economy' (in which goods are replaced with staged personal experiences), of which they are part.⁴ Bishop concludes that practices which emphasise social differences and dissonance, or which produce a 'relational antagonism', create a better basis for social and political critique – and, she implies, aesthetic sophistication.⁵

A number of scholars, critics, and artists have responded to Bishop's criticisms, and made their own contributions to the debate on questions of participation, including some whose works are the subject of her critique, such as Gillick.⁶ In performance studies, for instance, Shannon Jackson and Jen Harvie have offered insightful critical perspectives on the various claims and counter-claims, and broader issues at stake.⁷ In response to both Bourriaud and Bishop, Jackson has argued for greater attention to the networks and systems of social support on which relational practices (and life in general) rely.⁸ Pointing out the questionable polarisations around which Bishop's critique is organised (such as social celebration versus social antagonism),⁹ Jackson extends her assessment to patterns of criticism more broadly in which 'aesthetically organized acts of performance receive homogenizing and facile treatment'.¹⁰

Taking up the lens of performance, then, and focussing more closely on Bishop's art historical contextualisation of relational art, a link is drawn between the problematic

⁴ Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', p. 52.

⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

⁶ Liam Gillick, 'Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"', *October*, 115 (Winter, 2006), 95-106.

⁷ Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 6-10; Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (London: Routledge, 2011) pp. 45-55.

⁸ Jackson, *Social Works*, pp. 27, 46, 54.

⁹ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

‘community-as-togetherness’, as Bishop perceives it, and histories of performance, particularly performance art in the 1970s:

This idea of considering the work of art as a potential trigger for participation is hardly new – think of Happenings, Fluxus instructions, 1970s performance art, and Joseph Beuys’s declaration that ‘everyone is an artist.’ Each was accompanied by a rhetoric of democracy and emancipation that is very similar to Bourriaud’s defense of relational aesthetics.¹¹

As Bishop’s critique of Bourriaud is centred on the ‘weightlessness’ (as Jackson says) of his paradigms,¹² this narrative’s inclusion of performance forms, as historical precursors to relational art, ties them together as subjects of her overarching scepticism of socially engaged practice which produces *rhetorics of* (and not actual) democracy and emancipation. At other points in the article Bishop suggests with comparable cynicism that ‘1970s performance art’ can be characterised by its emphasis on immediacy, ‘authenticity of our first-hand encounter with the artist’s body’, and unified (as opposed to decentred and incomplete) subjects.¹³ Here and elsewhere, for example in her later book *Artificial Hells*, Bishop draws from and re-affirms RoseLee Goldberg’s now-familiar (and still contestable) narrative of the emergence of performance art from early-twentieth-century European avant-gardes.¹⁴ She credits the crypto-fascist (or in the case of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, card-carrying fascist) male artists of Italian Futurism with inventing performance as a mode of making art, and then charts developments in performance through to neo-avant-garde practices of the late 1960s, such as those surrounding the Situationist International, and finally to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which together comprise (rather too neatly) a ‘narrative of the triumph, heroic last stand and

¹¹ Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, pp. 61-2.

¹² Jackson, *Social Works*, p. 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 66.

¹⁴ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 3.

collapse of a collectivist vision of society.’¹⁵ Bishop goes on to describe a subsequent rise in ‘outsourcing’ and ‘delegation’ as prevalent modes of participatory art, for instance in works by artists such as Tino Sehgal and Santiago Sierra. Sierra’s work, in which participants are paid to perform ‘invariably useless, physically demanding’ labours which ‘on occasion leave permanent scars’, is valued by Bishop for its challenging ‘relational antagonism’.¹⁶ With fleeting reference to prominent women artists such as Marina Abramović and Martha Rosler, *Artificial Hells* generally focuses on an affirmed historical patrilineage of men artists and activists including Bertolt Brecht, Guy Debord, and Augusto Boal.

Appealing for ‘bold, affective and troubling forms’, Bishop makes insightful criticisms of the danger of participatory art works – typically those grouped as ‘community arts’ – being instrumentalised by the state in providing structures for social interaction or support in times of shrinking access to state welfare.¹⁷ However, developing on from the ideas in ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, *Artificial Hells* tends to conflate identity politics with ‘consensual’ participatory models, and works towards an argument for turning focus away from them and their ethical humanism (as Bishop perceives it), in contemporary art:

In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as ‘unethical’ because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalising.¹⁸

Bishop stresses ways in which contemporary performance has moved (or should move further) away from 1970s performance art and its others, such as the Happening form, and their

¹⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, pp. 3, 41.

¹⁶ Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, p. 71.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 25. The first chapter of *Artificial Hells*, from which this quotation is taken, is based on an earlier article: Claire Bishop, ‘The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents’, *Artforum* (February 2006), 179-185.

emphasis on ‘shared experience of authentic presence and immediacy’.¹⁹ Practices concerned with identity politics in which the artists typically use their own bodies are thus rendered anachronistic and laden with the outmoded conceptual baggage of an ‘authentic’ artist-performer (i.e. it would seem, what is best left in the 1970s).²⁰

This suspicion about projects invested in notions of participation and communities, which have attempted to reach out to new audiences outside of the existing gallery-based institutions, and to diversify art practices within them, echoes concerns voiced during the rapid expansion of such projects in the 1970s. John A. Walker marks out one emblematic example from the period, *Des Warren is a Political Prisoner* (1975), a work by Art & Language, a conceptual art group established in 1968 whose work often centred on engagements with poststructuralist theory.²¹ Consisting of a poster which draws attention to capitalist agendas in education (specific to art and more broadly), and supports trade unionism and the National Building Workers’ strikes,²² the work also railed against more unlikely targets. The text reads, ‘[t]he art rip-off hit its highspot in “community arts” – you know, earnest arty bores, embarrassing people with their unfunny mime, community theatre, inflatable sculpture’.²³ Taking a slightly different tack to Bishop, the poster casts public funding for ‘earnest’ community-based projects as a ‘rip-off’, and by implication potentially threatening to distract and detract from more ostensibly credible practices around trade unionism and labour rights. Interestingly, the role of theatricality is also foregrounded in the poster’s reference to

¹⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 156.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 25; Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, pp. 54, 66.

²¹ John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 130-2.

²² Des Warren was a construction worker and trade union activist convicted and imprisoned in 1973, alongside actor Ricky Tomlinson, for conspiracy to intimidate, causing an affray, and unlawful assembly arising from their activities at a flying picket. Despite the range of protests by trade unions, friends and family taking place around the convictions, Warren served almost all of the three-year sentence and later wrote of his ill health resulting from his imprisonment.

²³ Walker, *Left Shift*, p. 132; Art & Language, *Des Warren is a Political Prisoner* (1975), LEAMG: A1008.2003 (64/24590), Victorian, Modern and Contemporary Fine Art Collection, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum, Leamington Spa.

community theatre, mime, and inflatable sculpture (which is often interactive), as a constitutive quality of these ‘embarrassing’ activities of ‘arty bores’.

Looking more closely at discourses emerging from within historical fields of performance, a more specific but no less vehement critique of notions of participation in art emerges. In a 1973 report to the Arts Council of Great Britain, titled ‘The Situation Regarding Performance Art’, Jeff Nuttall grouped artists Carlyle Reedy and David Medalla together, alongside others, in a somewhat cynically titled category, ‘other crusaders’.²⁴ He defined them as:

the remains of the old late-1960s, blow-your-bone underground, their hair still lyrically long or Krishna-cropped, the Tantric symbols still swinging round their lovely throats. [...] They are the let’s-go-back-into-the-garden people, spinning telepathic cobwebs, reviving religion; they present the lifestyle of the collective as a creative achievement in itself, even (hilariously) to the Arts Council. You are apt to see inflatables around them. They create urban spiderwebs beside the psychic ones, ostensibly festive but ultimately dogmatic, by which unsuspecting proles are drawn nearer to the coleslaw and the meditation.²⁵

Clearly disparaging in tone (and actually quite funny in the context of an official report to the Arts Council), Nuttall echoes previously cited sentiments expressed by Art & Language about ‘embarrassing’ community arts ‘bores’.²⁶ In this chapter, I tease out an implicit gesture underpinning Nuttall’s account towards artists structurally and systematically ‘other’ and othered, a status which is contingent on factors of identity or identification. I look at works by Reedy (a woman and a mother), and Medalla (a gay Asian man) and place them as anchors for

²⁴ Jeff Nuttall, ‘The Situation Regarding Performance Art [1973]’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), 175-7 (p. 176).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Art & Language, *Des Warren is a Political Prisoner* (1975), *ibid.*

considering participation in reference to a wider range of subjects, which includes who or what is represented in the ICA archive as well as who or what is not. Participation here is understood as a conceptual framework – which includes notions of diversity and difference – for a feminist reading of performance at the ICA in the 1970s, as well as a formal category for making art that is both constituent of, and in conversation with, performance. As the chapter develops, I also shift at times to focus more intently on the issue of diversity, which is central to questions of participation – and indeed feminism. I argue that to situate performance art as an outdated history in opposition to more recent antagonistic participatory art, as Bishop implies, is to construct an artificial and misleading binary which fails to reflect that they share multiple representational modes, or that their histories overlap. I also challenge Bishop's related suggestions, that participation which is sensitive to difference produces only bland consensus, that performance art is organised around immediacy, assumptions of 'authenticity', and unified, coherent subjects, and that projects of identity politics initiated in the 1970s are now implicitly concluded.

Taking the germinal years of feminist art activity in 1970s as the subject of this chapter (and thesis), I am not calling for a nostalgic return to a utopian past of collective and convivial models of working; rather, I want to include the mess and failures of early attempts to recognise and respond to notions of diversity, and argue for renewed attention to participatory processes of performances as important for ongoing dialogues about our present and future. Bishop's critique, when charted against Art & Language's objection to the 'earnest arty bores' of 'community arts', demonstrates that considerations of diversity and participation require further attention – and perhaps defence. Approaches to such issues have indeed been plagued by oversimplification, and troublesome assumptions in scholarship and practice, but I argue that participation (which includes diversity) remains a crucial and perpetually contested discursive space. I take the example of two events at the ICA in the 'long' 1970s; firstly, an untitled

Happening in 1969, in which Reedy performed with her new born baby for an audience gathering inside an inflatable structure; and secondly, a participatory art event led by John Dugger, in collaboration with David Medalla, *People Weave a House!* (1972), in which visitors to the gallery were invited to participate in weaving a house structure from plastic tubing over the duration of the month-long show. Running with Nuttall's terminology, both events necessarily involve an artist who is structurally and systematically 'othered' occupying mainstream and public gallery space. Indeed, as Reedy explained to me in interview, after an experience of being silenced by an audience member at a performance of her poetry (which I will go on to explain), Reedy had then turned to the presence of her live body as the form and subject of her work.²⁷ The significance of Reedy being present and literally 'taking up space' at the ICA becomes particularly pointed with the inclusion of her son (who was around three months old at the time), in a historical context in which, for women artists, motherhood typically heralded an assumed exit (or continuing 'absence') from participating in making and showing work.

As peers who made early experiments into performance and social liberation activities around the same time, Reedy and Medalla continued to join together at different points through the 1970s and beyond, for instance as part of activities with Artists for Democracy.²⁸ Reedy is perhaps best known as one of the 'Children of Albion' poets who came together around a famous 1965 Allen Ginsberg reading in London (the *International Poetry Incarnation*

²⁷ Carlyle Reedy, interview with the author, 3 August 2013, London.

²⁸ Artists for Democracy was initially founded to organise an exhibition and series of events at the Royal College of Art and in public London locations in 1974, to catalyse protest against General Pinochet's military rule of Chile. See Walker, *Left Shift*, p. 177. Sonia Knox recalls powerful feelings of international and collective networks of solidarity during this time; interview with the author, 26 June 2014, London. Later, Medalla chaired the Artists for Democracy cultural centre in Fitzrovia, which, as both Knox and Reedy have told me, was active in providing a range of challenging art activities every weekend, such as performances by Nick Payne, Rasheed Araeen, David Medalla, and many others, as well as occasionally offering accommodation to travelling artists. See Carlyle Reedy interviewed in Eleanor Roberts, 'Daring to be Present: An Interview with Carlyle Reedy', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25.4 (2015), 561-72 (pp. 569-70).

at the Royal Albert Hall), and her work in poetry and live performance was typically centred on themes of contemplation, peace, the environment, and surreal humour. Similarly, Medalla's work often focused on effervescent forms of nature represented in conceptual and kinetic sculpture, such as his iconic bubble machines in the series *Cloud Canyons* (1963-). Indeed, there is some basis to Nuttall's characterisation of Reedy and Medalla as aligned with 'hippie' underground or countercultural practices. Medalla, for instance, established his dance group and communal live-in the Exploding Galaxy four years earlier, at Balls Pond Road in 1969,²⁹ which Guy Brett argues 'represented a decisive turn away from the recognised art world'.³⁰ Medalla reflects on his experiences of young people experimenting at this time, to varying degrees of success, with ways in which to express their dissatisfaction with 'the values of a morally bankrupt [mainstream] society' and to resist capitalist consumerism, while they were dismissed in the press as foibles of 'The Flower People'.³¹ Medalla acknowledges that efforts taken to understand and combat oppression, 'sometimes wisely sometimes not so wisely', were hardly consistent in their results.³² However, intriguingly, as Nuttall describes the participatory element in the work of these 'other crusaders', he also points to an underlying threat, hinting at the potential for 'unsuspecting proles' to be unwittingly co-opted (or somehow conned) and recruited to their alternative agendas.³³ Perhaps Nuttall was right to caution the Arts Council about the potential impact of such practices, which blurred the limits of art practice and the politics of living. The Exploding Galaxy, and its later incarnation Transmedia Explorations, had already been an important space in which artists including Genesis P-Orridge (as the artist was

²⁹ See Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies: The Art of David Medalla* (London: Kala Press, 1996).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

³¹ Medalla cited in *ibid.*

³² Ibid.

³³ Nuttall, 'The Situation Regarding Performance Art', p. 176.

then known), Cosey Fanni Tutti (known then as Cosmosis),³⁴ John Dugger,³⁵ and many more had met, lived, and made early experiments in their innovative practices. Indeed, reflecting on the development of their practice Genesis BREYER P-ORRIDGE has marked out the Exploding Galaxy for its transformative effects: ‘it was there that we were mutated by the rigorous aesthetics into entirely new ways of seeing what art could become’.³⁶ In its impact on wider arts scenes in London and beyond it is exemplary of the kind of ‘rippling outwards’ effect described by Anne Bean: ‘One recognises how small changes can have a subtle significance.’³⁷

As the feminist paradigm of ‘the personal is political’ gathered momentum in increasingly wide cultural spheres, these artists made use of their bodies in live performance, incorporating differences of gender, race, ethnicity, culture or sexuality directly into their work as a subject or point of critique.³⁸ For instance, Medalla has referred to his feminist politics recently where, as part of a *Documenting Live* roundtable discussion, he located his artistic influences among a ‘lot of women artists’, particularly Lygia Clarke and Anne Bean, adding, ‘I’ve always been a feminist at heart, maybe because I grew up with a lot of sisters’. Medalla’s comment, ‘I do that because I feel at home – I don’t feel at home with guys’, is arguably in tension with the fact that his collaborations have usually been with men (including Paul Keeler, John Dugger, Oriol de Quadras, and Adam Nankervis). However, those productive friendships and sexual friendships between men have a specific set of politics of their own (in any case, it is also not the direction of this study to affirm or refuse any possible status of the ‘feminist artist’). Indeed, it is important that this thesis should acknowledge ways in which collaborations

³⁴ Genesis BREYER P-ORRIDGE describes their arriving at the Exploding Galaxy in 1969 in Dominic Johnson, ‘Positive Surrender: An Interview with BREYER P-ORRIDGE’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), 134-45 (p. 141).

³⁵ Dugger describes his early experiences with the Exploding Galaxy in terms of theatrical art practice; John Dugger, email correspondence to the author, 5 September 2015.

³⁶ Johnson, ‘Positive Surrender’, p. 141.

³⁷ Bean interviewed in Johnson, ‘Hiding in Plain Sight: An Interview with Anne Bean’, p. 55.

³⁸ See, *Documenting Live*, Roundtable 1 DVD [‘1990s artists’], D1960, Live Art Development Agency Study Room, London.

between men also offer interesting insights into early explorations into participation in art, which is why I focus on Medalla's collaboration with US-born (and now US-based) artist John Dugger *People Weave a House!* (1972) at a later point in this chapter. While Reedy, Medalla, Dugger, and other artists I look at in this chapter must be considered somewhat distinctly from each other, I am interested in understanding how their practices can be placed in conversation with, and read through, feminist politics and histories.

Carlyle Reedy is a London-based artist whose broad body of work includes visual arts such as collage-painting, live performance, and text-based pieces including poetry and artist's books. Born in the US and educated in France, Reedy has been consistently present amongst the pioneers of performance art forms with her Happenings and events (even if written histories have generally failed to acknowledge this), and is an important figure in countercultural London from the mid-1960s. After moving to Notting Hill, Reedy founded her Arts and Community Centre, and then The Crypt (which would later become a lynchpin venue in the emergent English pop-rock scene).³⁹ Both were cutting edge but almost entirely undocumented spaces for underground, improvisational, and experimental arts, where artists such as The People Band (who collaborated with The People Show) had some of their first shows. Reedy's live work in the period appeared alongside that of Stuart Brisley, John Latham, Peter Dockley, Cornelius Cardew, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Shirley Cameron and Bobby Baker, amongst many others. The important spaces for new arts in 1960s and 1970s London in which Reedy's work was shown includes the ICA, as well as Drury Lane Arts Lab, Acme Gallery, Gallery House, Artists For Democracy, Middle Earth and the non-gallery WHSHT events (which peers, including Stuart Brisley and Bruce Lacey, also took part in). Reedy's poetry is also featured alongside that of only four other women in Michael Horovitz's anthology *Children of Albion* (which arose from the *International Poetry Incarnation* event I cited earlier)

³⁹ Reedy, interview with the author.

and published as a monument to the 1960s countercultural London poetry scene.⁴⁰ Through to the 1980s, Reedy established collaborative performance companies including O-Productions and Monkey Theatre, in which Paul Burwell worked before going on to form the Bow Gamelan Ensemble with Anne Bean and Richard Wilson in 1983.

Reedy has been an important figure in the proliferation of performance art, interdisciplinarity and conceptualisation across the arts in the UK from the 1960s, though her contributions to these areas are typically under-acknowledged. There are a few exceptions to this; in particular Guy Brett has been a consistent advocate of Reedy's work for decades, and has published critical pieces, and promoted the artist in his curatorial practice.⁴¹ Reedy featured in the 1998 large-scale survey exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (8 February – 10 May) curated by Paul Schimmel at the Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles alongside a staggering range of artists working with the live body, such as now iconic figures Marina Abramović, Jim Dine, Allan Kaprow, Yoko Ono, Yves Klein and many more. Though modestly consisting of a series of slides documenting rehearsals for a single work *Human Visual Sculpture in Contemplative Time* (1971), Reedy's inclusion in the exhibition at all would seem highly surprising, given her relative marginalisation, if it weren't for Brett's influence as an advisor in curating the show.⁴² Other documents on Reedy's work include critical pieces by Alaric Sumner, an unpublished interview conducted by Natasha Morgan in 1986, and a handful of relatively cursory reviews and

⁴⁰ Michael Horowitz (ed.), *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground in Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

⁴¹ Guy Brett, 'Exhibitions: Carlyle Reedy', *Art Monthly*, 93 (Feb 1986), 12-3; Guy Brett, 'Carlyle Reedy's Collages: So That Things Can Move On', in *Carnival of Perception: Selected Writings on Art* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2004), pp. 200-6.

⁴² Guy Brett, 'Life Strategies: Overview and selection Buenos Aires / London / Rio de Janeiro / Santiago de Chile 1960-1980', in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, ed. by Russell Ferguson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), pp. 197-226.

acknowledgements.⁴³ More in-depth critical attention has been paid to Reedy from theatre and performance studies than from art criticism or scholarship. For instance, in 1970 Naseem Khan (who, in addition to writing an important diversity report *The Arts Britain Ignores* in 1976 also brought experimental theatre groups to visibility as Theatre Editor at *Time Out* magazine)⁴⁴ wrote a feature on Reedy in the *Guardian*, and described her work as ‘ruthless, quiet, as pure as she can make it, and not easy’.⁴⁵ Khan detailed how Reedy altered existing Happening forms by focussing less on physical audience participation, and more on the psychic investment of the artist in what Reedy termed ‘events’. Overall, however, as Guy Brett put it over 25 years ago, Reedy is an artist who has received ‘disgracefully little recognition from the art world, but who has for twenty years had a high prestige among other artists’.⁴⁶ To be an ‘artist’s artist’, if Reedy can be described as such, might hold cachet status, but, as New York artist Jack Smith used to say, it does not pay the rent.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, as an artist approaching 80 years of age, Reedy’s decades of practice have recently begun to come to be re-appraised and brought into further visibility by feminist art historical research and initiatives,⁴⁸ and a solo

⁴³ Alaric Sumner, ‘Carlyle Reedy: Straddling Language and Performance’, *Performance Research*, 5.1 (Spring 2000), 70-3; Alaric Sumner, ‘Language Image Sound Object: Carlyle Reedy’, *PAJ*, 61 (1999), 93-8; Natasha Morgan, ‘Interview with Carlyle Reedy’ (British Library, C1295/14, 1986); *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Keith Tuma (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 629; RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 24, 130.

⁴⁴ Naseem Khan, *The Arts Britain Ignores: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain*, 2nd edition (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1978).

⁴⁵ Naseem Khan, ‘Poet in Public’, *Guardian*, 11 November 1970, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Guy Brett, ‘Exhibitions: Carlyle Reedy’, p. 12. This impression of Reedy as an ‘artist’s artist’, is well illustrated by one particularly vitriolic review of *Human Visual Sculpture* at the Royal Court, which incited only ‘irritation’, ‘bearing-down and throwing-up pains’. See Virginia Dignam, ‘Shuffle, Cough, Wait’, *Morning Star*, 18 February 1971 [clipping in THM/273/712/261, Royal Court Theatre Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London].

⁴⁷ See Dominic Johnson, *Glorious Catastrophe: Jack Smith, Performance and Visual Culture* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 60.

⁴⁸ Reedy’s work was a reoccurring subject, among others, of a number of discussions which took place during a research project on ‘Live Art, Feminism and the Archive’ (2013-15), led by Lois Weaver in collaboration with the author and Live Art Development Agency. One outcome of the research project was a print and online publication, *Are We There Yet? Study Room Guide on Live Art and Feminism*, ed. by Lois Weaver, Eleanor Roberts and Live Art Development Agency (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2015) <<http://www.studyroomguides.net/>>.

exhibition at Flat Time House, curated in 2014 by Karen Di Franco, which took archival documents from Reedy's home as the basis for much of the show.⁴⁹

There are many potential aggravators of this historical marginalisation, for instance Reedy's persistent play across and between forms and disciplines, as well as her resistance to the institutionalising mechanisms of gallery representation, archival organisation, and 'career' ambition. Long-term illness has also had an increasingly debilitating effect, and Reedy's literal absence has been a subject of notoriety at times where planned events failed to materialise.⁵⁰ Indeed, spontaneity, experimentation, ephemerality, transformation, social dialogism, the risk of failure, and the non-heroic all feature consistently across her work. Also apparent is a feminist and social-political engagement that is explicit, and at times entirely embodied by Reedy's presence within sites of art activism such as Artists for Democracy - although her participation is also complicated by a primary commitment to surreal and existential forms of humour. The effervescence of Reedy's - at times enigmatic - approach is perhaps summarised in her interview with me, where she explains, 'you *don't take sides*. The world is funny, the world is full of paradox', which seems representative of the artist's particular kind of working anti-manifesto.⁵¹ The sum of the above is a working practice of a woman and artist, that is indeterminately multiple in its form, and which avoids classification, even as far as national identity. This multiplicity and elusiveness may partially explain Reedy's absence from the art historical canon, in contrast to peers - particularly her male peers - who are situated more comfortably within historical narratives. For instance, while Reedy also presented work alongside Stuart Brisley's early performances (even simultaneously in the same venue), she

⁴⁹ *Carlyle Reedy - Icons of a Process* took place at Flat Time House 4 - 28 September, 2014. A booklet was produced on the occasion of the exhibition, which features an in-depth interview with Reedy; Guy Brett and Karen Di Franco (eds.), *Carlyle Reedy: Icons of a Process* (London: Flat Time House, 2014).

⁵⁰ Alaric Sumner, 'Obituaries for the Living: Celebrating, Forgetting, Writing Off, and Killing Off - Carlyle Reedy and dsh', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 5.2 (1999), 39-50 (p. 46).

⁵¹ Reedy interviewed in Roberts, 'Daring to be Present', p. 562.

remains relatively invisible, whereas Brisley is recognised as the ‘grand old man of English performance’,⁵² and an architect – even the ‘godfather’ – of live art forms.⁵³

Reedy now works mostly with text, occasionally giving poetry readings in London, and with collage-painting, in which she typically mixes found scrap materials and debris with other more typically valuable items such as jewellery and small decorative objects. In both text and visual work, echoes of earlier twentieth-century avant-gardes are visible, for instance of Dadaist Kurt Schwitters’ inventive use of materials and the non-material performing body and voice.⁵⁴ Even where Reedy is not working with live performance but with visual objects, as she pointed out in an interview with me, the work always involves ‘relationships with people and an awareness of humanity’.⁵⁵ During the course of my conversations with the artist, Reedy foregrounded Brett, Medalla, and Vicuña as friends and influential peers, particularly around spaces where art and liberation movements intersect, such as Artists For Democracy’s activity in support of refugees fleeing General Pinochet’s regime in Chile in the mid-1970s.⁵⁶ The art practices of Medalla, and Vicuña are tied with Reedy’s in their sociality and commitment to egalitarian principles, surreal interruptions into public space, and celebration of flux, experimentation, and chance. These qualities can perhaps be emblematised by the fleeting acts of play in Medalla’s spewing bubble machines, *Cloud Canyons* (1963-). Medalla described Reedy’s work and ‘risk-taking’ as ‘metaphors for survival’, specifically ‘psychic survival, that is to

⁵² Linda Frye Burnham, ‘Site-seeing in London: Observing Edge 88’, *TDR*, 33.2 (1989), 10-5 (p. 11).

⁵³ LUX, collection entry for Stuart Brisley <<http://www.lux.org.uk/collection/artists/stuart-brisley>> [accessed 3 February 2014].

⁵⁴ Anonymous, ‘*Collage and New Collage-Paintings* (6-21 December 1986) [press release]’, Information Files on Carlyle Reedy, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁵⁵ Reedy, interview with the author.

⁵⁶ As an ally to the UK during the Falklands War, Pinochet benefited from a friendship with Margaret Thatcher, who resumed arms trade to Chile when she became UK Prime Minister in 1979. Later, Thatcher supported Pinochet and assisted him in avoiding extradition to Spain to face charges of war crimes; ‘Thatcher Stands by Pinochet’, *BBC News*, 26 March 1999 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/304516.stm>>; Grace Livingstone, ‘Uncovering Britain’s Secret Role in Protecting Chile’s 1973 Coup’, *Guardian*, 11 September 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/11/chile-1973-coup-britain-protecting>> [accessed 15 December 2015].

say, the survival of the creative spirit in the midst of so much global mindless violence, of so many lies perpetuated by the media, of so much desecration of the national environment, of so much abuse of the individual human being.⁵⁷

Though often demonstrating overtly political concerns, Reedy's work is rarely confrontational, but typically contemplative, where silence and forms of meditation are deployed as acts of thought in protest against thoughtlessness in a world of rapid change. Similarly, RoseLee Goldberg groups Reedy along with Rose English and Rose Garrard as being engaged in feminist art in Britain that is 'quietly reflective', and aesthetically dissimilar to the 'emotionally searing' performances of VALIE EXPORT or Gina Pane in mainland Europe.⁵⁸ Indeed, Reedy describes a point around 1967 where, after seeing her poetry 'shouted down' by a man in the audience at Middle Earth (a countercultural club venue), she turned to the silent presence of the body as artistic medium – and its potential as political statement. In a four-hour durational performance, *Being Me* (ca. 1967-68) Reedy stood atop a piano-shaped stage, set with four cigarettes to smoke, naked but for a sheer net dress. Silent but insistently present, Reedy's challenge was 'to be able to look all of the audience in the eye', concentrating the tension of simply *being*, of a non-verbal communication between a performer and a viewer; 'the silence was resounding', she recalls.⁵⁹

Such an encounter might suggest an emphasis on the 'authenticity of our first-hand encounter with the artist's body' that Bishop relates to performance art of the 1970s.⁶⁰ As Reedy gives permission to the audience to take pleasure in looking at her through the net dress, it may also evoke familiar readings of the explicit body as bound up with narcissistic tendencies and collusion with heterosexist ways of seeing (as critics have assumed of Carolee Schneemann's

⁵⁷ Medalla cited in Brett, *Carnival of Perception*, p. 200.

⁵⁸ Goldberg, *Performance*, p. 130.

⁵⁹ Reedy, interview with the author.

⁶⁰ Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', p. 54.

Naked Action Lecture or *Fuses*, for example).⁶¹ Initially, one might also wonder what artistic and political possibilities are contained in the very act of being oneself, as the title suggests. However, when situated historically in a male-centred space, in which expressions of feminine subjectivity are met with hostile reception (as in the case of the man who shouted Reedy down), the manner in which *Being Me* functions as a critical – and indeed confrontational – intervention becomes more apparent. Seen and not heard, Reedy's performance acts as a record and response to her experience, as one of many experiences accumulated and redeployed in the silent exposure of her semi-naked body. This strategy might be compared to Vietnamese filmmaker and feminist theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha's theorisation of embodied archival modes and languages developed by women across histories:

The world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. In the process of storytelling, speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. It destroys, bring into life, nurtures.⁶²

Rather than reinforcing the unified and 'authentic' encounter, Reedy's performance thus registers the patchwork of experiences that informs one's own identity as always bound up with other material histories that exceed the present. *Being Me* emphasises communication with others in purposeful eye contact, but also a deep social (and gendered) disjuncture. As Minh-ha wrote, '[my] story, no doubt, is me, but it is also, no doubt, older than me.'⁶³

Reedy's work in what, in 1969, the Arts Council of Great Britain dubbed 'New Activities', was seen as part of a growing polarisation between the political Left and Right, as

⁶¹ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 76.

⁶² Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

well as between traditional arts and countercultural practices.⁶⁴ In performance, the *Come Together* (21 October – 9 November 1970) festival at the Royal Court Theatre (perhaps surprising for a relatively mainstream institution) showcased such ‘new activities’ by Stuart Brisley, Ken Campbell, Peter Kuttner, and Peter Dockley, as well as Reedy’s *Fish Event*.⁶⁵ Reedy, dressed in a robe, with the back embroidered from top to toe with an image of herself (Fig. 12),⁶⁶ appeared on the large downstairs stage, against a projected backdrop of what one critic described as ‘strange’ layered slides, distorting an underlying image of the artist’s face.⁶⁷ With samurai precision Reedy applied her make-up (or war paint), as though preparing for battle.⁶⁸ The artist recited fragments of text before descending into the pit of the gutted auditorium to retrieve from a wooden coffin a huge frozen fish, similar in length to her own body; she dragged it on stage and hung it from a hook. As the fish was left swinging in the light of the projector, Reedy produced a machete (‘no-one knew where it came from’, she told me in an interview), before ritualistically hacking into the carcass.⁶⁹ Representing the astrological sign of Pisces (according to the artist), the ‘death’ of the fish was a metaphor for, Reedy says, ‘the death of the ego’. The artist appeared, as one reviewer put it, as a ‘High Priestess’ in the ritual killing of a dream self.⁷⁰ Just as feminist ideas surrounding the ‘personal is political’ gathered momentum in increasingly wide cultural spheres, Reedy’s work dealt with acts of liberation and contemplation of the self as part of wider humanity. As the artist herself puts it, ‘I believe the work I was doing belongs within the aegis of the existential reality of each person taking the

⁶⁴ Roberts, ‘Opinion’, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Stemming from her ‘celebrated appearance’ in *Come Together*, Reedy was invited back to the Royal Court to perform *Thoughts of the Fish*, a continuum of events spread over a week-long run in December 1970. See, typed document entitled ‘Carlyle Reedy introduces *Thoughts of the Fish*’, THM/273/4/8/4, Royal Court Theatre Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁶⁶ An image of Reedy dressed in the robe, preparing for the *Fish Event* is reproduced in Roberts, ‘Daring to be Present’, p. 564.

⁶⁷ Vincent Guy, ‘Come Together’, *Plays and Players*, 18.3 (Dec 1970), 30-31 (p. 31).

⁶⁸ Reedy, interview with the author.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Guy, ‘Come Together’.

responsibility for piggery and violence within *themselves*.⁷¹ The concept of humanity, which Reedy emphasises as she reflects on her own work, might be read as jarring alongside important arguments of more recent feminist thought, particularly those of women of colour, which have worked to dismantle historically pervasive assumptions of universality. While acknowledging this possible tension, Reedy's *Fish Event* can be situated alongside feminist forms of consciousness-raising, expressing a feminine aggression which produces a meaning that is specific and personal (or even therapeutic) in confronting a notion of the self, and political in expressing that critical distance, and refusal of assumptions of feminine passivity.

To re-focus attention back to the context of the ICA, Reedy's Happening in 1969 was one of four performances inside *Pneutube*, an environmental sculpture by Eventstructure Research Group, consisting of an inflated PVC structure of three tubes stemming from a central tetrahedron. For the happening, Reedy – who features as an unnamed 'performer' in the ICA press release – greeted visitors at the entrance to the *Pneutube*. Sitting in a makeshift living room she had created, which included a television filled with blinking lights to create a sparkling effect, and her baby in a carrycot, she read her poetry and talked with the audience. After the audience had moved further into the *Pneutube* to see the other works, Reedy took her baby, replaced him with a dead rabbit, and left. As she explained to me, 'when they came back [to exit the *Pneutube*] there was an image evoking fear and dread, and everything that the mother has – I left them to experience it. I think it might have been a bit cruel of me but it seemed like a gift, to say 'here is the vulnerability at this level'. She adds, 'this way you could also suggest the imminence of catastrophe that one feels when you have a tiny little vulnerable infant'.⁷² Just as much as Reedy intervenes into the gallery space by foregrounding her experience and identity as a mother in the figurative womb of the *Pneutube*, she also subverts

⁷¹ Reedy, interview with the author.

⁷² Reedy, interview with the author.

the maternal and domestic care-giving role in utilising the dead rabbit to unsettle her audience. The dead rabbit as signifier of anxieties of motherhood is intensified in Reedy's subsequent absence; having assumed a gendered role as 'hostess' in welcoming the audience, she then withdraws her service and leaves potentially perplexed guests to take care of themselves. Reedy's gesture recalls the type of maternal ambivalence described by Mignon Nixon in relation to the figure of the mother in the work of Louise Bourgeois, she is 'not only an object of ambivalence or a figure produced with the help of ambivalence, but a figure in which the creative power of ambivalence is lodged'.⁷³ Bourgeois' looming sculptures of spindly mother-spiders (as in *Spider*, 1997) express 'a presence at once protective and menacing'.⁷⁴ Similarly, Reedy's *Happening* also produces a space in which 'creative and destructive trends converge' – a multiplicity of maternal experiences not acknowledged by patriarchal culture.⁷⁵

While I have been able to relay a relatively straightforward narrative of the event by interviewing the artist, a problem for my research is that no detailed documentation, photographs or reviews of this event exist; my research relies on fallible memories of the artist herself of an event that took place almost half-a-century ago. Considered in relation to its lack of archival representation, questions emerge about the extent to which I am at risk of overstating the significance of an unnamed performance that took place on a single evening, and was experienced by a small number of ICA members. Indeed, the relative marginality of Reedy's participation in the institution prompts questions surrounding not only the space afforded to, and occupied by, women, but also the quality or potential of that space. The manner in which seemingly marginal or minor events are historicised remains a pressing issue for feminist criticism. For example, take as an example the later *Thin Black Line* (ICA, 1985)

⁷³ Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2005), p. 272.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

exhibition of black women artists, one of a series of London exhibitions curated by Lubaina Himid.⁷⁶ The exhibition was an important critical intervention by black women into mainstream art institutional space, but also, as black feminist painter Rita Keegan commented, sadly limited by the gallery to only a single corridor space; in this sense the works were again resituated physically in the margins.⁷⁷ One strategy for reconfiguring this ‘marginality’ for feminist use is proposed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak where she theorises on the possibility of utilising the ‘private’ and ‘marginal’ self as a shuttle that could ‘not merely reverse but displace the distinction between margin and center’ as it moves between and within different positions.⁷⁸ Here, for my feminist scholarship it is essential that I acknowledge Sonia Boyce’s warning against only acknowledging the very presence (or even simply the absence) of artists in history; as she points out about Black British art, ‘when attention has been paid [...] there hasn’t really been a discussion of the work, there’s been discussion of things around the work.’⁷⁹ While recent strategies have demonstrated the ongoing urgency of naming women artists, it is also important to build more qualitative knowledge about women’s lives and practices.⁸⁰ Lack of visibility and attention to the work itself allows the artists’ project to be reduced and limited to questions of an implicitly marginal identity, as the assumed subject of the work. And so, in my reading of Reedy’s *Happening*, a tension emerges between the significance of *being present* in the public institution as a deliberate feminist strategy (and indeed, a specific element of Reedy’s

⁷⁶ The artists included in *The Thin Black Line* were Marlene Smith, Veronica Ryan, Sonia Boyce, Claudette Johnson, Maud Sulter, Chila Burman, Brenda Agard, Sutapa Biswas, Jennifer Comrie, Lubaina Himid, and Ingrid Polla.

⁷⁷ Rita Keegan documents, ‘Artist Placement Group CVs’, TGA 20042/2/3/2/42 APG, Tate Archive, London.

⁷⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Explanation and Culture: Marginalia [1979]’, in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29-52 (p. 35).

⁷⁹ Sonia Boyce interviewed by Manthia Diawara, ‘The Art of Identity: A Conversation’, in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Houston A. Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 306-13 (p. 306).

⁸⁰ See Eleanor Roberts, ‘Feminism and Live Art: Why Bodies?’, in *Are We There Yet? - A Study Room Guide on Live Art and Feminism*, ed. by Lois Weaver, Eleanor Roberts, and Live Art Development Agency (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2015) <http://www.studyroomguides.net/?page_id=19>. I will also explain one naming strategy deployed in Sonia Boyce’s *Devotional* (1999-) at a later point in the chapter.

practice), and a danger of over-stretching the significance of the artists' identity at the expense of more nuanced understandings of what the work represents.

While there is no record (or for the artist, no memory) of which of her poems Reedy might have read at the ICA, we can refer to her earlier published poems, which show how Reedy's documentation of her own life emerges as a central component of her art practice. One unnamed poem from her 1964 collection *The Orange Notebook* reads:

dear j

living quietly with p

terribly sweet, shower mustard, rosebrown, the cabinet

[...]

we spent time on all the news and quiet

growing through discoveries

more than before.

(mortality,

an awareness of,

£13 per month plus utilities⁸¹

I notice a number of things about Reedy's approach: the wilfully fragmented quality of the writing holds ellipses and grammatical anomalies which are at once disruptive to a straight-

⁸¹ Carlyle Reedy, *The Orange Notebook* [1964] (London: Reality Studios, 1984), p. 6.

forward reading, and secretive as to what they refer to, but also pregnant with possibilities in their representation of an interior view of Reedy's everyday life. In this poetic form of documentation of her experience, domestic and everyday items (£13 per month plus utilities) are seen, imagined, shared and contemplated as the significant substance of what Dominic Johnson calls 'the art of living'.⁸² As for her ICA Happening with her new-born son, the family is imbued with potential as an artistic and political subject. Reedy's construction of her living room inside the *Pneutube* might be considered in relation to what bell hooks and Hazel V. Carby have both independently identified, namely the family as a social 'site of political and cultural resistance'.⁸³ While some feminist histories (particularly white histories) have been seen to be, as Carby says, engaged in projects which sought to dismantle the patriarchal, heterosexual, and reproductive family from the late 1960s, women of colour, particularly in the 1990s, theorised ways in which the family space has also held potential to 'challenge and transform'.⁸⁴ Similarly, for hooks, performance in the home has held a 'crucial' function as a tool for developing voice and oratory practice in political (particularly black and feminist) movements.⁸⁵

Reedy blends spaces of the domestic, the familial, and the art institutional, between the 'centre' and the 'margin', but I also argue that her Happening enables me to push at the limits of how feminist practice of the 1970s has been perceived. In its apparent 'marginality', a feminist historiographical approach to Reedy's work can draw out ways in which its aesthetics of slightness, ephemerality, and vulnerability can be reclaimed against assumptions that such tactics are 'lacking' in comparison to masculinist projects which might seek a monumental type

⁸² Dominic Johnson, 'Introduction', in *The Art of Living*, pp. 1-15 (p. 1).

⁸³ Hazel V. Carby, 'White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, pp. 61-86 (p. 64).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ bell hooks, 'Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition', in *Let's Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance*, ed. by Catherine Ugwu (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1995) pp. 210-21 (p. 211).

of permanence. As Reedy herself said, ‘I couldn’t do *monumentality* if I tried’, and she continues to warn against the trap of being drawn into a feminist project of ‘whether or not you can win the game’, adding ‘That’s the same old game isn’t it?’⁸⁶ To argue for an aesthetics and politics of anti-monumentality might ring alarm bells in light of the many crucial feminist projects that have worked against marginalisation and towards increased visibility of women and others in mainstream and public spaces. However, there is now a substantial history of feminist theories and practices which have made compelling arguments for the redeployment of desires, positions or politics which may seem self-compromising in the first instance – such as tactics of ‘disidentification’ proposed by José Esteban Muñoz, and rearticulated by Amelia Jones (explained in Chapter Two).⁸⁷ Minh-ha has also made important contributions to this area in her theorisation of a self as ‘not quite the Same, not quite the Other’, but comprised of shifting, intertwined layers, against historical conceptions of a ‘true’, central self.⁸⁸ Writing in the 1990s Minh-ha elaborated on concepts she first proposed in the 1980s whereby Otherness might become empowering as a mode of critical difference, ‘when it is not given, but re-created’:⁸⁹

The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside [...] Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider. She is this Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming ‘I am like you’ while persisting in her

⁸⁶ Reedy, interview with the author.

⁸⁷ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 4-5, 15; Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 9.

⁸⁸ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 74.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

difference; and that of reminding 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at.⁹⁰

Minha's theory of an 'Inappropriate [or Inappropriate/d] Other', 'as someone whom you cannot appropriate, and as someone who is inappropriate', is centred specifically on experience and identification relating to non-white women and migrant subjects, as Others of the West and of men.⁹¹ Importantly, however, it also holds wider feminist application for how to acknowledge and make *use of*, rather than seek to simply flee the historical social, cultural and political histories that inform feminine identification. For example, Minh-ha's theories offer a generative model for reading Reedy's redeployment of silent, withdrawing, ephemeral and maternal femininities (which are 'inappropriate' in either feminist or institutional terms, for instance) as fruitful critical and aesthetic strategies.

Minh-ha's theories also hold implications for historiographies of feminist performance, in her emphasis on story-telling is a potentially feminist archival mode that cuts across historical boundaries – in which '[every] gesture, every word involves our past present, and future'.⁹² In light of ways in which Reedy deploys her art of the everyday, rather than seeing a reliance on memory as an inferior substitute for lack of archival 'evidence', for example in relation to the ICA Happening, I would argue that the practice of constructing from memory as a type of oral history is not only necessary in accessing the work, but also a potential strength in de-centring the archive as a repository of patriarchal investments. Indeed, Reedy's work is deliberately engaged in acting on, or acting out, constantly shifting memories and images of the imagination: the TV is not a TV, she is there and then not there, the living child is transformed to a dead rabbit. In this sense, what might appear to be a self-evident fact of the performance – that

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

⁹¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha interviewed by Marina Grzanic, 'Inappropriate/d Artificiality', <<http://trinhminh-ha.squarespace.com/inappropriated-artificiality/>> [accessed 21 March 2016].

⁹² Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other*, pp. 121-3.

Reedy presents her ‘authentic’ artist-performer self (to refer to Bishop’s framework) is troubled; as the artist disrupts, disturbs and transforms *what is*, the very notion of ‘authenticity’ and the fixed referent is radically destabilised. Its very status as ‘marginal’ in the archive allows for a feminist historiography which re-appraises marginal, slightheadedness, and fragile information which might be considered as suspicious in their spectral representation of a ‘lost’ live event. A number of feminist thinkers have proposed ways in which this work might be done; for instance, in her book *Anecdotal Theory*, Jane Gallop writes that:

‘Anecdote’ and ‘theory’ carry diametrically opposed connotations: humourous vs. serious, short vs. grand, trivial vs. overarching, specific vs. general. Anecdotal theory would cut through these oppositions in order to produce theory with a better sense of humour, theorizing which honors the uncanny detail of lived experience.⁹³

Gallop proposes a model of thought that pursues ways in which taking anecdotal experiences of the everyday as a starting point can lead to greater understanding of ways in which they can inform and are informed by theory, troubling patriarchal conceptions of intellectual ‘seriousness’ and personal detachment. Gallop’s scholarship is indebted to earlier feminist thought, particularly Spivak’s call in 1979 for recognition of a productive ‘feminist marginality’ which is irreducible and resistant to ‘masculinist centrism’.⁹⁴ Spivak’s ground-breaking advocacy of what she termed (as I explained in the introduction) ‘scrupulous and plausible misreadings’ of the archive, transforms historical research, particularly as it destabilises notions of historical authenticity and truth, on which positivist models of history are based.⁹⁵ As we have seen from Reedy’s example, Bishop’s ‘authentic’ artist-performer as an outmoded, potentially embarrassing vestige of performance art of the 1970s begins to come undone as we read further

⁹³ Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 2.

⁹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Explanation and Culture: Marginalia [1979]’, p. 35.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

into those practices. Following on from Spivak and Gallop's anecdotal theory, I argue that the challenges posed by Reedy's practice enable a transformative interpretation, which may foreground the artist's 'real' self, but also productively explore the possibilities of multiple self-fashioned selves in resistance to the fixed central subject of a masculinist monumentality.

Much of this thesis is centred on a feminist imperative of 'recovering' obscured histories of women and feminist artists by undertaking archival research into works which are currently underrepresented by scholarship and criticism. That feminists of colour, such as Spivak, Minh-ha, and Muñoz, have frequently led the way in proposing new models of feminist interpretation and re-thinking visibility makes it all the more striking that (women) artists of colour are relatively absent from the historical narrative – which brings us to the more directly to the specific question of diversity. As I explained my introduction, the 1970s as a site or context for these histories, and object of study in itself, is considered particularly significant for, as theatre critic, writer and policy advisor Naseem Khan has recently said, early attempts to recognise and respond to diversity in parallel with questions surrounding identity politics, which resonate into the present.⁹⁶ For example, in her landmark report, *The Arts Britain Ignores: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (1976), Khan sets out an account of existing practices of artists of colour and ethnic minorities in the UK (particularly focussing on community-based projects and theatre and dance organisations – information on visual artists is comparatively scarce), and makes a persuasive and urgent case for further funding and active patronage of these groups of people. In the report, Khan describes such arts in terms of 'an energetic but struggling sub-culture. On the whole they exist for the communities alone – necessarily, since little encouragement is given them to expand. The problems they face are those of neglect.'⁹⁷ She

⁹⁶ Naseem Khan speaking at 'Performance and Politics in the 1970s', Whitechapel Gallery, 30 May 2015.

⁹⁷ Khan, *The Arts Britain Ignores*, p. 5. One of the key outcomes of the report is that, following its recommendation for the establishment of 'a linking, publicising and advisory service for ethnic arts', MAAS (Minorities' Arts Advisory Service) came into being in October 1976. MAAS was founded by Khan and Jamaican-

points to lack of access to rehearsal areas, equipment, exposure, costs in travelling and transport, materials, and so on, which contribute to the marginalisation or relative invisibility of artists of colour in public space. In a postscript written for the second edition, published two years after the original report, Khan points out local and small-scale successes following the report's recommendations, but asks

Where is the increased money deemed necessary? Where are the centres, the representatives on arts boards of ethnic arts? Where is the evidence of infiltration into every area of life – from subsidised theatre to the educational curriculum – that *The Arts Britain Ignores* called for? Are the libraries of Britain blossoming with manifestations of ethnic art? Are festivals opening out their arms to them? Has a string of vigorous ethnic cultural centres developed? The plain answer is that they have not.

Finally she adds, '[e]conomic cutbacks, in particular a local authority level, have militated against growth'.⁹⁸

Disconcertingly, over 35 years later, Khan's concerns are still applicable, particularly in the context of economic 'austerity' and persistent and swathing cuts to public services and budgets for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. For instance, in a report published in 2015 Sir Peter Bazalgette (Chair of Arts Council England) declares that diversity still 'needs to go mainstream', while failing to acknowledge the extreme belatedness and bitter irony of his being 'pleased that diversity, in its most inclusive and exciting sense, is *beginning* to inform our work [at Arts Council England] at a deep level'.⁹⁹ Although the report shows statistical

born Veronica Lovindeer, and included board members Norman Beaton, Peter Blackman, Ravi Jain, Shantu Maher, and Tadek Jarski. Khan, *The Arts Britain Ignores*, p. v.

⁹⁸ Khan, *The Arts Britain Ignores*, p. iii.

⁹⁹ Sir Peter Bazalgette, 'Foreword', *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report 2012-2015* (Manchester, Arts Council England, 2015), p. 5. Accessible online at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Equality_Diversity_and_the_Creative_Case_A_data_report_2012-2015.pdf> [accessed 14 December 2015]. Emphasis added.

improvements in the diversity of funding recipients, marginalisation of particular groups persists, particularly in relation to age, disability, and the overwhelmingly white workforce of public museums.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the report reveals nothing about curatorial choices, earnings, access to training or education, institutional representation of artists more broadly, or other hugely important factors in considering diversity in the arts in the UK. In the way the report is constructed, with particular types of data, it is also unable to tackle more complex questions about the type of activity that is being funded and undertaken by different groups, which are particularly pertinent for a thesis which examines formal innovations of performance art and related practices (as I will go on to explain).

On the publication of Khan's 1976 *The Arts Britain Ignores*, Pakistani-born, UK-based artist Rasheed Araeen commented at the time:

It has not only divided black people into black and Asian groups (as if Asians are not black) but pigeonholed their activities into various ethnic categories, and relegating them to a subcultural level. It seems to have concluded that black artists have not yet done anything worthwhile outside the narrow boundaries of their ethnic traditions.¹⁰¹

Araeen argues that the categorisation of artists by heritage or ethnic identity in the report is counter-productive to solidarity between artists of colour, and he criticises ways in which work by artists of colour is characterised as outside of the mainstream (as in Bazalgette's foreword to the 2015 report – again, history appears to repeat itself here). Even more complicated territory is at stake where Araeen argues that the innovations of artists of colour are excluded, marginalised, or invisible in accounts or appreciation of formal developments in modernism

¹⁰⁰ *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case*, p. 8. While funding awards to National Portfolio Organisations almost reflected the proportion of women and people of colour UK population groups, the disabled population continue to be vastly underrepresented.

¹⁰¹ Rasheed Araeen, 'Preliminary notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO [London 1975-76]', in *Making Myself Visible* (London: Kala Press, 1984), pp. 73-97 (p. 91).

and new art movements.¹⁰² The implication here is that arts by artists of colour are assumed to be part of foreign ‘heritage’ or, as Araeen says, ‘ethnic tradition’, and not part of (white) innovation or avant-garde practice.¹⁰³ Indeed, as I have said, it will be evident to the reader that this thesis has not included any substantial discussion of performance by women of colour in the UK in the 1970s. The reason for this is ultimately because the ICA in the 1970s, as a gallery and in its archival representation, appears to fail to represent women of colour working in Happenings, performance art, or participatory art (the subjects of this study). This is not to say that women of colour were not working in these areas, for example the relative marginality or absence of high profile international artists at the time, such as Yoko Ono, from the ICA’s programme is glaring.

However, what is evident is that strategies in scholarship, arts practice, and community organising do emerge, particularly from the late 1960s, to challenge wide-ranging and complex issues of diversity, and at the same time as experiments in performance across and between more traditional arts disciplines. The 1970s must be recognised as a period during which the feminist movement and feminist artists shifted the landscape of contemporary art practice, and foundations were laid for the Black British arts movement which would come to mainstream prominence in the 1980s. This includes: the establishment of Artists’ Liberation Front in 1971 and Artists for Democracy in 1974 by David Medalla, John Dugger, Cecilia Vicuña and others; the opening of the Drum Arts Centre for black arts in 1974; Khan’s report and her co-founding of Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS) in 1976; and pioneering research by black scholars in the UK such as Stuart Hall. Such innovations are wholly bound with considerations of identity and identification, which are particularly pronounced where artists use their own

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁰³ In a more recent article, Khan addresses this in a way by describing a shift that occurred in arts practice by people of colour in mainstream cultural landscapes of the 1980s, where, she argues, ‘new generations started to uncouple’ from ‘motherland allegiances’. Naseem Khan, *Reinventing Britain: Cultural Diversity Up Front and On Show* (London: *Guardian* and decibel, 2003), p. 2.

bodies as a material in their work, and these logics continue to pose urgent and complex questions for us today.

As Guy Brett and others have written, London in the late 1960s was a crucible for artists arriving from around the globe,¹⁰⁴ exchanging ideas and collectively propelling nascent arts movements engaged in feminist, Marxist, and civil rights discourses. For example, Medalla had sporadically lived in other countries, but first moved from the Philippines in 1960, and Reedy, relocated from the US in 1964 (the same year as Araeen). Subsequently, curatorial strategies emerged at the ICA to represent artists of colour and black political discourse; for instance, the opening of the new ICA at Nash House in 1968 heralded the establishment of the Martin Luther King prize of £100 (the equivalent of just over £1,500 in 2015), ‘awarded for a literary work reflecting the ideals to which Dr. Martin Luther King dedicated his life’;¹⁰⁵ *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* (1968) was advertised as the ‘first exhibition in Europe of contemporary Japanese sculpture, miniatures, graphics, posters, new music, kites, and films’;¹⁰⁶ and *Black Night* (1968) consisted of a collection of ‘Third World’ plays featuring Black British activist and actor Courtney Tulloch and Guyanese poet, writer, activist and musician Marc Matthews.¹⁰⁷ The following year included the *From Cuba* season of film and poetry, and in 1970 a *Contemporary African Art* exhibition was supplemented by evenings of poetry, performance and dance by African (or African heritage) artists, including Peggy Phango, a black artist, jazz singer, and civil rights advocate who had first arrived in London from South

¹⁰⁴ Guy Brett, ‘Life Strategies: Overview and selection Buenos Aires / London / Rio de Janeiro / Santiago de Chile 1960-1980’ in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, exh. cat. ed. by Russell Ferguson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), pp. 197-226 (p. 200).

¹⁰⁵ *The Magazine* [ICA Bulletin], 1.2. (May-June 1968), p. 32, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Lucie-Smith, ‘Things Seen’, *The Times*, 21 January 1969, p.14.

¹⁰⁷ Mike Phillips, ‘Obituary: Courtney Tulloch’, *Guardian*, 13 December 2006

<<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/dec/13/guardianobituaries.obituaries1>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

Africa in 1961 to star in *King Kong*, a hit West End jazz musical.¹⁰⁸ Events focused on ‘international’ projects and artists of colour continued as a feature of ICA programmes through the 1970s, particularly in performance, poetry and theatre; for instance, Trinidadian poet and playwright Mustapha Matura and Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka both performed their works in 1972, and over four nights in January 1973 Horace Ove and Lindsay Barrett presented their co-directed *Blackblast*, a work of ‘ritual theatre with music and dance, performed by an all-black cast’, which ‘expresses in terms of raw bodily experience the history of the Black peoples of the world through colonization, slavery and the complexities of the neo-colonialist era’.¹⁰⁹

Despite the significance of these events, and the importance of the artists for the development of Black British arts and discourse, major or sustained exhibitions of contemporary artists of colour, particularly women artists of colour, continued to be proportionately scarce at the ICA. There is a profound difference in representation between visual arts, which typically occupies more space in the gallery and for a longer period of time on the one hand, and live poetry and theatre events which were frequently fleeting, ‘one off’, and characterised as ancillary to other, more prominent programmes on the other. In the case of innovations in theatre in the UK more broadly, as Lynette Goddard has pointed out, the 1970s is marked by increasing numbers of practitioners creating their own companies of black actors and works which dealt with issues of race and ethnicity, in contrast to existing ‘alternative theatre’ structures which foregrounded issues of class and reproduced the existing marginalisation of race – and of black participants.¹¹⁰ Such strategies, which might contain elements of a politics of active withdrawal from inadequate existing structures and mainstream

¹⁰⁸ Peggy Phango performed as part of an ‘African Arts Evening’ (8 July, 1970), *ICA Bulletin*, July 1970, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁰⁹ ICASM [ICA Bulletin], January 1973, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹¹⁰ Lynette Goddard, *Staging Black Feminisms: Identity, Politics, Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 17.

institutions, comprise an important part of artistic practice in the UK, and cannot be considered simply as an unavoidable product of institutional neglect. Another factor to consider is that where there is institutional visibility of Black British arts milieu in the 1970s, representation tends to revolve around key male figures such as Frank Cousins, who founded the Dark and Light Theatre (later renamed Black Theatre of Brixton), and the aforementioned Mustapha Matura.¹¹¹

At the same time, as Goddard writes, some women artists of colour in history have been ‘reluctant to subscribe to feminist agendas’, specifically where those agendas have been dominated by the concerns of white European – and middle-class – cultures and histories.¹¹² For instance, SuAndi and Susan Lewis, who pioneered performance forms in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s, have both rejected the feminist label on these grounds, while still providing powerful critiques of intersecting oppressions based on race, gender, class, and other factors of experience.¹¹³ Elsewhere, alongside black feminisms, productive alternative models of practice and thought, such as those relating to ‘womanism’ emerged from the late 1970s. Following the publication of Alice Walker’s short story ‘Coming Apart’ (1979) in which the term first appeared, womanism as a school of thought and practice developed through the 1980s as ‘complementary’ to, but distinctly apart from, existing structures of feminism,¹¹⁴ which frequently fell short of intersectional analyses and understandings of how patterns of power in post/colonial societies affected men of colour, for example, or how whiteness is constructed.¹¹⁵ What is clear is that women artists of colour have too often been absent from historical narratives, and complementary strategies have emerged which focus on maintaining memory

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 17-19.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 177.

¹¹⁴ Laura Gillman, *Unassimilable Feminisms: Reappraising Feminist, Womanist and Mestiza Identity Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 5

¹¹⁵ Layli Phillips, ‘Introduction – Womanism: On Its Own’, in *The Womanist Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. xx-xxi.

and archival representation of these women and their works, such as Sonia Boyce's ongoing *Devotional* (1999-) series, which collects archival material and the names of black women singers in the UK. Having begun with a workshop for women sharing experiences of music in 1999, the series now includes representation of singers from the nineteenth-century through to the present. Boyce remodels what archival representation and collective memory might look like by making art objects inspired by the singers, and fashioning their names into wallpaper designs, for example.¹¹⁶ Scholars including Goddard have also begun the important work of redressing the lack of knowledge around performance practices by women artists of colour, though further work needs to be done to establish the significance of women artists of colour working with performance in the 1970s, as well as women working in the 1980s and 1990s including Sonia Boyce, Mona Hatoum, SuAndi and Susan Lewis.

As I have already mentioned, in the case of the ICA, while artists of colour featured in the ICA programme, particularly in performances of theatre, dance, and poetry, their appearance is characterised as marginal, fleeting, or as events and film programmes which are ancillary to other, more central exhibitions; and so it is crucial to find ways to extend and maintain the life of otherwise 'ephemeral' works and events by writing about them. However, a further obstacle emerges in relation to questions of form and the scope of this study. In examining the ICA archive I have so far been unable to find substantial representation of women artists of colour working in the 1970s in experimental performance categories of performance art, Happenings, or participatory art, which intervened into traditional disciplinary distinctions, for example between visual arts and theatre practices. This certainly does not necessarily mean that there were no women artists of colour working in these areas (even within

¹¹⁶ National Portrait Gallery, *Devotional* <<http://www.npg.org.uk/devotional/>> [accessed 15 December 2015]; Alexandra M. Kokoli, 'Now, Then, and Again: Between Anniversary and HERitage', essay written for the exhibition *Liberties: An Exhibition of Contemporary Art Reflecting on 40 Years Since the Sex Discrimination Act* (Collyer Bristow Gallery, London, 2015).

the ICA); rather, I have encountered biases written into the archive not only in relation to questions of representation, visibility, and curatorial strategies, but also in terms of how practices are categorised, for instance in their documentation.

Araeen, who in the same decade was making innovative work in the performance categories outlined above, argued in the mid-1970s that institutional engagement with art by black or ‘Third World’ artists across Western cultural economies was typically arranged around, or limited to, institutional frameworks and assumptions of ‘ethnic traditions’, and not formal or political innovation.¹¹⁷ To offer an illustrative example, following his performance *Paki Bastard* (Artists For Democracy, 1977), Araeen was invited in 1980 by Ikon gallery director Hugh Stoddart to take part in an exhibition of artists ‘whose work is linked by a determination to push art beyond the usual boundaries of discretion and acceptability’.¹¹⁸ However, Araeen proposed not to re-enact *Paki Bastard* as suggested, but instead to present a new durational performance, video and installation work, *Black Sheep*, based on a prior performance for camera, which would involve ‘the slaughtering of a sheep, skinning the animal, cooking the meat, and eating the cooked meat collectively’ over two or three days in the gallery.¹¹⁹ Two months after receiving Araeen’s proposal, which drew from ritual elements of an Eid feast, Stoddart retracted his invitation. In his rejection letter to Araeen, Stoddart cited ‘a very clear reaction’ from the other artists and organisers that the work ‘does not fit’ with the rest of the planned exhibition.¹²⁰ His letter continues: ‘Essentially, the feeling is that the rest of the show is to do with sources for work deep within the imagination and this source is profoundly different from yours – since the ritual is, as it were, a normal occurrence albeit in a particular

¹¹⁷ Rasheed Araeen, ‘Preliminary notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO’, pp. 73-97.

¹¹⁸ Hugh Stoddart and Rasheed Araeen’s letters are reproduced in facsimile in Rasheed Araeen, ‘Baba Goes to Birmingham’, in *Making Myself Visible*, pp. 136-44.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139. The final exhibition, *Imagination Is the Venom Passing Slyly Through the Vein* included Brian Catling, Stephen Cochrane (with Lol Coxhill), Stephen Dilworth, David Duly, Tom Gilhespy, Richard Mackness, Jayne Parker, Ian Sinclair, Elaine Shemilt and Sue Wood.

milieu.’¹²¹ In a handful of letters back and forth, Araeen presses for an explanation as to Stoddart’s reasoning, pointing out that ‘all artistic activity is to do with imagination’, and he exposes the logic of cultural othering by which his proposal (which is based on his own experience) is interpreted by Stoddart and the other artists (here, assuming the role of gatekeepers) as unsophisticated or a reproduction of Asian ethnic domesticity, and outside of the realm of creativity. However, the final letter only reiterates Stoddart’s embarrassed apology: ‘I can only say I felt there was a strong feeling coming from other artists participating in the show’.

Setting aside the obvious factor of (likely hypocritical) squeamishness relating to meat slaughtering and consumption, such an example strikingly illustrates the patterns of institutional ‘taste’ and categorisation by which some cultures and histories have been considered suitable subjects, material and sources for innovative and experimental art, but others can only exist within quotidian limits of a ‘normal occurrence’ (even if belonging to a different culture). It is very possible that, by similar logics, practices of women artists of colour are incorrectly inscribed within the archive as unrelated to formal or artistic innovation, typically appearing as unnamed dancers or entertainers. Furthermore, it may be that for a variety of personal and/or political reasons, such practices have not been documented at all, or simply rejected or overlooked by institutions at the time. This makes historicising them all the more complicated, whereas Araeen’s works are now more readily accessible as research subjects as he has taken meticulous care to archive his own practice, and (as the title of his book suggests) make himself visible.

Exceptionally, women of colour appear by name in the ICA archive as actors participating in works directed by men, or as ancillary or supporting performers. For example, Peggy Phango, whose musical performances had been popular and a commercial hit, appears

¹²¹ Araeen, ‘Baba Goes to Birmingham’, p. 139.

in a single line of the ICA Bulletin as part of an ‘African Arts Evening’, alongside Didi Sydow, whose work is described only in a single word as ‘dancing’.¹²² Similarly, in the case of *People Weave A House!*, which I will go on to discuss further, the contributions of Hong Kong-based choreographer Helen Lai (who trained and was based in London at the time) to the events surrounding the main exhibition are vaguely categorised in the ICA Bulletin as involving ‘traditional Chinese dance exercises’.¹²³ Such archival representation appears to reinforce the charge posed by Araeen, namely that artists of colour in the 1970s were typically admitted to institutions of art only in relation to specific programmes of ‘ethnic tradition’, and not on the basis of their innovation or contributions to new arts. As disciplinary distinctions between ‘visual art’ (frequently coded as ‘high’ art) and theatre, for example, present a stumbling block for even commemorating (let alone interpreting) women of colour pioneers of experimental performance, a different approach to this thesis would have been to collapse distinctions between these formal categories – which would allow further space to better understand and celebrate practices by women of colour such as Phango, Sydow and Lai.

Examples of similar logics of what is and is not considered part of ‘avant-garde’ or ‘neo-avant-garde’ trajectories are also visible in other ways at the ICA during this time. In 1974 Araeen wrote a letter to Caroline Tisdall in response to her *Guardian* review of the exhibition *Art ↔ Society* (ICA, 1974), outlining his disappointment at her failure to convey the points he raised at the exhibition’s opening panel discussion.¹²⁴ Particularly, Araeen criticised the speakers for their designation of the exhibition, which centred on the relationship between artists and society, as ‘international’, when the work was exclusively that of white German artists Albrecht D. (born Dietrich Albrecht, the reversal riffs on the name of German Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer), Joseph Beuys, K. P. Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav

¹²² ICA Bulletin, June/July 1970, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹²³ *ICASM* [ICA Bulletin] November 1972, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹²⁴ Rasheed Araeen, ‘Conspiracy of Silence’, in *Making Myself Visible*, p. 67.

Metzger, and Klaus Staeck. Araeen writes that he contested the meaning of ‘international art’ at the panel discussion with the artists, Tisdall, and curator Norman Rosenthal, but that his challenge was met with a ‘complacently negative’ response. He writes, ‘[w]hat I did not realize was that these German artists had gathered there, in fact, only to talk about their contributions to the “international” avant-garde art movements; and therefore they could not [respond] to any suggestion which could expose their true relationship to the system which they believed they wanted to destroy’.¹²⁵ For Araeen, this ‘conspiracy of silence’ at the ICA exemplified the widespread institutional attitude that artists of the ‘Third World’ were not engaged in, nor did they contribute to, ‘avant-garde’ cultures. Furthermore, that ‘international’ status was typically employed to describe ‘Euro-American’ (to use Araeen’s term) art exhibitions, which sustained the continuing marginalisation of work by artists of colour under the guise of cultural diversity. *Art ↔ Society* was characterised in its publicity in terms of radicalism against the institutional status quo; for instance, Joseph Beuys featured prominently in the exhibition as, alongside exhibiting sculpture works, he also set up and led an ‘ongoing teaching and discussion situation’ to take place over the course of the exhibition at the ICA, which appeared to centre on concepts of ‘making art more political’.¹²⁶ In light of Araeen’s provocation, however, we begin to get a sense of how the limits of the exhibition’s claims to radicalism can be delineated.

As in Bishop’s reference to Beuys in her account of 1970s performance art, Beuys’ approach can be summarised by two defining concepts: his famous dictum that ‘everyone is an artist’,¹²⁷ and his practice of what he called ‘social sculpture’ (*Soziale Plastik*), which was ‘related to everybody, to everybody’s existence and to all problems in the society’.¹²⁸ Beuys gestured to potentially fruitful and innovative ways in which bodies in social space constitute sculpture, and

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

¹²⁶ Caroline Tisdall, ‘Unstill Life’, *Guardian*, 1 November 1974, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Caroline Tisdall, ‘Introduction’, *Joseph Beuys*, ed. by Caroline Tisdall (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 7.

¹²⁸ Joseph Beuys, *Joseph Beuys Conversation with Eddy Devolder* [1977] (Gerpennes: Tandem, 1990), p. 10.

indeed, questions of widening participation beyond a specialised art profession. As such, as Anne Bean recently said of her first encountering them in the late 1960s, Beuys' ideas were 'astonishingly prescient' for artists working with performance in the UK.¹²⁹ Indeed, Beuys was a highly influential figure in foregrounding social experience and sociality in a range of mainstream and alternative art spaces (predominantly in visual art contexts). However, I also argue that we can make room for criticality here, as in his expression Beuys also affirms the paternalistic tenets of a universalising modernism. By this logic, which is assumed to address *all* people and *all* problems, great men are positioned as care-takers and teachers at the centre of a homogeneously coincident surrounding culture which, as it is modelled on their own worldview, they are in a dutiful position to solve. Despite possible good intentions, such attitudes inadvertently express, as Araeen writes, an underlying imperialist ideology. Similarly, as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh points out in his well-known 1980 critique, which sought to deflate the 'private and public mythology' of Beuys, the totalising impulse of incorporating art and everyday life echoed foundational principles of earlier avant-garde practices such as Dada (though unacknowledged by Beuys), but these were always ultimately subsumed by the autocratic author figure: 'Beuys's supposedly radical position, as in so many aspects of his activities, is primarily marked by his compulsive self-exposure as the messianic artist'.¹³⁰ Buchloh also cites a 'preposterous' contribution to a women's liberation gathering in New York, where Beuys asked, 'What can I do for you?'¹³¹

¹²⁹ Anne Bean in Dominic Johnson, 'Hiding in Plain Sight: An Interview with Anne Bean', in *The Art of Living: An Oral History of Performance Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 41-64 (p. 43).

¹³⁰ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique [1980]', in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 41-64 (pp. 43, 59).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

In contrast to Beuys' high international profile, following his arrival in the UK in 1964, Araeen struggled to secure institutional visibility and representation.¹³² After several solo and group shows in Pakistan, a group show in New York, and a handful of UK shows – particularly organised around artists involved in the SPACE initiative¹³³ – it was not until 1975 (more than ten years after arriving in the UK) that Araeen would be granted a solo show in the country in which he lived, which finally took place at Artists for Democracy, an artist-led initiative co-founded by David Medalla, John Dugger and Cecilia Vicuña that specifically focussed on 'Third World' artists, politics and participation. While Araeen's work was not well represented by art institutions (it is quite likely this ties in with the vociferousness with which he critiqued patterns of prejudice), he was also part of a wider artistic milieu, some of whom held easier (if still productively critical) relationships with galleries, museums and funding bodies. David Medalla, for instance, regularly exhibited work in art institutions nationally and internationally, as in his contribution to the high-profile group show *Live In Your Head: When Attitude Becomes Form* at the ICA (curated by Harald Szeemann, the show toured to the ICA, 28 August – 27 September 1969).¹³⁴ In Medalla's case, however – archival representation is destabilised in other ways, as memory, story-telling – and, more particularly, queer modes of autobiography – are productively disruptive to expected narratives of historical linearity.

I do not attempt to give an overview of Medalla's biography, as much of his life and practice has been documented in existing accounts: Guy Brett's *Exploding Galaxies*, which was

¹³² Araeen's institutional visibility has not greatly improved, although, like many artists referred to in this thesis such as Cosey Fanni Tutti, John Dugger, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Susan Hiller, and Alexis Hunter, Araeen was among a group of artists included in the Whitechapel gallery *Live In Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965-75* (2000) group show, who were not included in the original *Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) ICA show.

¹³³ As I mentioned in the second chapter, the SPACE initiative was established in 1969 as an artist-led support network which provided artists with studio and other social, educational, and work spaces.

¹³⁴ ICA Bulletin, August 1969, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

commissioned by Rasheed Araeen for his press, is particularly extensive.¹³⁵ However, I note here that a chronology of Medalla's life and work includes extraordinary travels around the globe from the 1950s, encounters with famous modernist figures Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Gaston Bachelard, and Walt Disney, and an artistic career launched by early experiments: his entry in the *Contemporary Artists* compendium lists his first 'co-operative sculpture project with farmers and fishermen' in Manila in 1951.¹³⁶ This event occurred on a family holiday, and consisted of Medalla, aged nine, mobilising family members to help him construct a sculpture made of clay resting on a coral island in the sea.¹³⁷ Indeed, a tremendous and fierce commitment to art as a social practice is evident throughout his artistic life, compounded, as he commented in a recent discussion, by the influence of 'all my boyfriends, so many lovers, I'm so promiscuous [*laughter*]'.¹³⁸ Indeed, John Dugger recalls of their travels 1969-1970, that during 'great and rare sights' visiting Buddhist monks in Asia, Medalla's 'predilections' became a nuisance to the project, amid 'scenes of his having queues of sailors and strange men outside his door at the hotels in which we stayed - and then him coming over to my room to lecture me on Buddhism'; he adds, 'I was not amused'.¹³⁹

Such biographical phenomena allow for a construction of Medalla as an eccentric, or possibly a fantasist, which are often unhelpful characterisations, particularly where they collide with a casting of the artist as a comic figure in the wings, or as Brandon Taylor noted in his 1977 interview, with a reputation as 'the marginal artist par excellence'.¹⁴⁰ While a possible status of 'marginal artist' can be productive when self-identified as a way of antagonising the

¹³⁵ Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies: The Art of David Medalla* (London: Kala Press, 1996).

¹³⁶ Colin Naylor and Genesis P-Orridge, 'David Medalla', in *Contemporary Artists* (London: St. James Press, 1977), pp. 631-2.

¹³⁷ Brett, *Exploding Galaxies*, p. 31.

¹³⁸ David Medalla in a roundtable discussion chaired by David A. Bailey, *Documenting Live*, Roundtable 1 DVD ['1990s artists'], D1960, Live Art Development Agency Study Room, London.

¹³⁹ John Dugger, email correspondence to the author, 5 September 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Brandon Taylor, 'David Medalla: In Conversation with Brandon Taylor', *Artscribe*, 6 (April 1977) 20-23 (p. 20).

mainstream, its designation is at odds with the fact that by the time of his ICA show with John Dugger, Medalla was already a pivotal figure in contemporary art practices in London and internationally. By the time Medalla was 35 his achievements included: editing *Signals*, the influential news bulletin from the gallery of the same name (1964-66); bringing international artists – particularly artists from Latin America, such as Lygia Clark – to the UK for the first time; founding the Exploding Galaxy (1967-68) and its offspring, Transmedia Explorations; pioneering kinetic sculpture and participatory art forms; exhibiting in public museums and galleries nationally and internationally; acting as an advisor to student artists at the Slade School of Fine Art; and chairing the Artists for Democracy centre in Fitzrovia. In reference to Medalla's astonishing biography, Brett commented in *Exploding Galaxies* that, '[s]ome see these as tall stories. More likely they are simply a spin-off of the immense ease with which Medalla gets talking with strangers (he once told me he reckoned he met twelve new people a day)'.¹⁴¹ In addition, and most crucially, I argue that Medalla challenges both the 'evidentiary logic of heterosexuality', and the restraints of straight time; as José Esteban Muñoz explains, 'to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer. To participate in such an endeavour is not to imagine an isolated future for the individual but instead to participate in a hermeneutic that wishes to describe a collective futurity, a notion of futurity that functions as a historical materialist critique.'¹⁴² Medalla consistently privileges ephemeral forms, chance encounters, and queer memories in his practice, which are too readily placed in the margins by interpretive logics which seek to invalidate that which is not recognised as part of history. To draw again from Muñoz:

¹⁴¹ Brett, *Exploding Galaxies*, p. 18.

¹⁴² José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009), p. 26.

Queerness is rarely complemented by evidence, or at least by traditional understandings of the term. The key to queering evidence, and by that I mean the ways in which we prove queerness and read queerness, is by suturing it to the concept of ephemera. Think of ephemera as a trace, the remains, the thing that are left, hanging in the air like a rumour.¹⁴³

What is not culturally ‘validated’ may include, for instance, how Medalla’s family holiday at the age of nine could have anything to do with art history, or indeed could be related to other, more historically ‘authorised’ practices across different time frames. Read through Muñoz, Medalla’s (self-) representational strategies can be drawn on as models for proving and reading not only queerness, but also the shifting ephemeral spaces occupied by women and others in performance more broadly (indeed, queer and feminist projects are, I argue, interminably intertwined).

A Stitch in Time (1968-72) is a particularly good example of a work by Medalla in which queer memory, quotidian materials, ephemera and chance encounters interlace, and are interminably extended. The participatory work, which exists in a number of versions, began in 1968 when Medalla met two ex-lovers (both stopping off on travels from opposite sides of the globe) at Heathrow airport. Giving them each a handkerchief (one black, one white), on which Medalla had stitched his name and a message, and a needle and thread so they could stitch something themselves on their flights (‘to alleviate boredom’), Medalla left them.¹⁴⁴ Some years later, while in an airport travelling from Amsterdam to London, Medalla caught sight of a young man ‘lugging a totem’ attached to his backpack, of fabrics stitched together – and found his original gifted handkerchief at the bottom. He then presented the work in a number of

¹⁴³ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁴ David Medalla interviewed by N. P. James, *David Medalla: Works in the World* (London: Cv Publications, 2012), p. 7.

forms, taking place in galleries, and as sculpture, for instance at *Documenta 5* in Kassel in 1972. *A Stitch in Time* prototypically ‘challenges the isolation of the artist’ – Medalla’s *raison d’être* of performance forms – as the constantly changing object moves between an indefinite number of participants who leave their trace.¹⁴⁵ I note that the way in which *A Stitch in Time* follows lines of exchange, which can be charted between lovers as their connections spread and expand to include widening groups of people, can take on a more tragic meaning following the beginning of the AIDS crisis, as sharing might become reinscribed in terms of contagion or toxicity. However, read alongside the contexts in which the work emerges, its insistence on the disorderly patchwork of fragmented memories of sexual and friendly encounters as a form and subject for art is crucial. Here, embroidery or stitching as a more traditionally ‘feminine’ craft, alongside the love letter or ‘memento’, is harnessed for its potential in producing a powerful political critique, as the later *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1977) exhibition at the ICA would also reveal in relation to women sending each other small, crafted items in the post (as I will go on to explain). Like Reedy’s art of living (to borrow again from Dominic Johnson’s phrase), such work takes place in the context of feminist demands for recognition that the personal is political, and continues to hold radical potential in its refusal of pragmatic modes. While Bishop argues against a type of pragmatism she perceives in relational aesthetics, whereby art is valued for its social use-function, I would suggest that delegated performances which take place today in the wake of a perceived collapse of a (singular, mythical) ‘collectivist vision’ can in turn be productively countered by forays into queer feminist utopia.¹⁴⁶

As I have suggested, within the ICA framework, *A Stitch in Time* can be situated alongside the later exhibition *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1977), which consisted of postal art sent between a network of women. The participatory art event, which would later be

¹⁴⁵ Taylor, ‘David Medalla’, p.20.

¹⁴⁶ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p .3.

given the title *Feministo*, began in late 1974 to early 1975 when Sally Gollop moved house, away from her friend Kate Walker, and they decided to send letters and objects to each other as a way of ameliorating their physical isolation at home.¹⁴⁷ As Alexandra Kokoli has written, the event grew to include over 30 women, some artists and others not, who knew each other to varying degrees, making and sending objects, such as Su Richardson's *Crocheted Breakfast* (1976), a knitted 'full English'.¹⁴⁸ Events where Medalla's own works were exhibited at the ICA include the *Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) exhibition, *People Weave a House!* (1972) where Medalla collaborated with John Dugger, and a performance work with Oriol de Quadras, *Reciprocal Didactics no.4 - Learning about Magellan & the Circumnavigation of the World* (1978).¹⁴⁹ Here, I focus on *People Weave a House!* and its explicitly participatory agenda, which also harnessed traditionally feminine craft (in this case, weaving). John Dugger, who led *People Weave a House!*, is an artist who moved to London from the US in 1967, after training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, getting involved in student politics and art movements in California, and briefly living in New York. After first contacting a friend at the Royal College of Art for somewhere to stay, a chance meeting led to Dugger taking up residence at the Exploding Galaxy house, where he met Medalla. Unfortunately, Dugger had only been there for two weeks when the Exploding Galaxy was targeted by two police raids, during which Dugger was accused of drug possession. In the interim between being charged and the trial (at which he was found guilty, despite maintaining the drugs were planted), Dugger made *Buddha Ballet* (1968) with Medalla on Parliament Hill,

¹⁴⁷ *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* documents, TGA 955/7/8/153, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁴⁸ Alexandra Kokoli, 'Undoing "Homeliness" in Feminist Art - *Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife* (1975-7)', *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, 13 (January 2004), 75-83 (p. 81).

¹⁴⁹ *Reciprocal Didactics no.4* is not included in the *Exploding Galaxies* list of exhibitions or works, though it does include a separate collaboration with de Quadras and Rino Telaro. I have been unable to find archival material relating to the work outside of its listing in the ICA Bulletins.

as a series of Sunday events where the public were invited to bring objects or costumes for an improvised participatory performance.¹⁵⁰

For *People Weave a House!* the historiographical problems of the research and examining it through the lens of participation are particularly tangled. I initially encountered *People Weave a House!* in the ICA Bulletin as a joint project between Medalla and Dugger, their roles defined in resolutely Maoist terms; Dugger leading the construction as ‘Head of the Workforce’, and Medalla, as ‘Head of Cultural Propaganda’, creating ‘breaks for discussion and politicisation’.¹⁵¹ Interspersed with Communist and Marxist quotations (comically juxtaposed in the archive with a letter from ICA director David Thompson to Medalla expressing the institution’s duty to be ‘impartial’),¹⁵² the work appeared in the publicity as arriving out of Dugger and Medalla’s previous collaborations, particularly the Artists Liberation Front (ALF).¹⁵³ Their ALF manifesto of 1971 offers an insight into the impetus behind their participatory forms:

Artists! Comrades! Defend yourselves against censorship, distortion and economic exploitation. [...] Boycott organisations and exhibitions which directly or indirectly support imperialist, neo-fascist and bureaucratic-capitalist regimes. Organise local Artists Liberation Fronts to overthrow the supporters of elitist Art.¹⁵⁴

Photographs of the event published by Medalla in *Art & Artists* show participants keenly working together to weave the plastic tubing,¹⁵⁵ aided by Dugger’s design for a *Star-Weaving Jig*

¹⁵⁰ John Dugger interviewed by N.P. James, *John Dugger: Ergonic Sculpture and Other Ventures* (London: Cv Publications, 2011), p. 21.

¹⁵¹ *ICASM* [ICA Bulletin] November 1972, TGA 955/14, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁵² Note from ‘David [Thompson]’ to David Medalla, TGA 955/7/2/50, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁵³ *ICASM* [ICA Bulletin] November 1972.

¹⁵⁴ Reproduced in John Dugger, *Microcosm*, exh. cat. (London: S.K. Publications, 1971).

¹⁵⁵ Photographs of *People Weave A House!* are published in David Medalla, ‘John Dugger: A collage-article’, *Art and Artists*, 7.12 (March 1973), 32-37.

(also called *Star-Weaver*, 1972 [Fig. 13]).¹⁵⁶ The *Star-Weaving Jig* was inspired by Dugger's prior trip to China, where in a moment of conversation lost in translation, a Chinese interpreter attempted to communicate with Dugger by drawing a star, weaving lines across his palm.¹⁵⁷ Dugger then continued in his correspondence with Medalla, who was liaising with the ICA, about his new idea for a 'factory for weaving stars'.¹⁵⁸ The poster for *People Weave a House!* further develops an aesthetic of a utopian idealism based in class struggle, and behind a busy background of weaving lines, it depicts Vietnamese 'women's militia fighting the U. S. aggressors' alongside other images of communities working and weaving around the world, coloured with flashes of red (Fig. 14).¹⁵⁹ Filipino artist Jun Terra and Helen Lai also performed music and Chinese dance workshops respectively throughout the exhibition, and Guy Brett curated a series of photographs on the theme of weaving practices. With this impression of the event, it can be reasonably understood by what logic Nuttall casts Medalla in the category of 'other crusader',¹⁶⁰ as the convivial invitation to build together clearly expresses its roots in experimentations in communal living emerging from the 1960s, as well as an unabashed faith in proletariat organising.

As the ALF manifesto suggests, *People Weave a House!* works towards an audacious and transparent call to break with hierarchical power structures and mainstream institutions, but – significantly – it does so while also lodged within or collaborating with them, like other feminist strategies to wrest control of public spaces. The communist and utopian aims of the work are hardly subtle, and indeed may be read as suspect, particularly in light of revelations among the Left about the violence and destruction of Mao's China, which would continue to emerge after his death in 1976. However, *People Weave a House!* suggests a utopianism that

¹⁵⁶ John Dugger, email correspondence to the author, 5 September 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ *People Weave a House!*, 'catalogue' poster, TGA 955/15/220, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁶⁰ Nuttall, 'The Situation Regarding Performance Art', p. 176.

extends beyond any single, specific framework, and is laudable in contributing to a history of art experiments which seek to widen participation as well as institutional understandings of what ‘counts’ as, or constitutes, art practice. To add to that, the artists make room for nuanced encounters between participants to take place outside of the very clearly defined ‘goal’ trajectory of the work. That the woven house structure itself was not preserved augments the work’s critical function not only in relation to the art object itself, but also notions of productivity that are entirely bound up with the advance of high capitalism. While seeming to involve the organisation of (productive) human bodies, the work actually suggests a critique of productivity and labour which might be claimed as queer and feminist. For example, the work can be interpreted via Judith/Jack Halberstam’s notion of a ‘queer time’ that is disruptive, ‘teenage’, and focusses on transient subcultures.¹⁶¹ In their book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Halberstam makes a case for ways in which ephemeral and queer time makes ‘clear how respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality’, which Halberstam rejects in favour of ‘recording and tracing subterranean scenes, fly-by-night clubs, and fleeting trends’ which resist entrenched notions of ‘normal’ (heterosexual) social reproduction.¹⁶² Similarly, Elizabeth Freeman has since offered a persuasive analysis of ways in which sex, sexuality, and related modes of affect and embodied performance might ‘gum up the works of the normative structures we call family and nation, gender, race class, and sexual identity’, and disrupt the ‘mechanized productivity’ of ‘chrononormative’, reproductive straight time.¹⁶³ The ephemeral objects of such temporalities may appear to work against ‘community’ projects which are more likely to seek longevity, visibility and diversity. However, rather than

¹⁶¹ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2005), p. 4.

¹⁶² Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, pp. 4, 161.

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 8, 173.

seeing these theories as at odds with pursuits relating to ‘community’ and participation, I draw from them as powerful models for a feminist historiography which brings together the ephemeral moment of a fleeting performance, which might exist as a note in the margins of an otherwise indifferent archive, and an insistence on historical visibility, longevity, and difference. Such projects, as Amelia Jones has suggested, hold a transformative potential for reconfiguring notions of duration.¹⁶⁴

However, yet more obstacles and contradictions also emerge in reading *People Weave a House!*. For instance, to what extent does the work express, appropriate, or reinforce the ‘other crusader’ identity? Where the poster collapses together African and Asian examples of weaving (in itself a historically gendered role) as homogeneously ‘Third World’ and Communist practices, does the work then enact another kind of cultural imperialism (albeit made strange by socialism)? Rita Keegan commented of the gendered nature of such ‘Third World’ representations in her account of entering into art practice and education in the late 1960s and early 1970s: ‘there was no women’s movement in art yet, no books on women’s art. The ideal woman was still barefoot and pregnant – and possibly weaving.’¹⁶⁵ While it may be that Keegan’s comment seems to lean on the side of hyperbole in suggesting there was no women’s movement at the time (likely a tactical characterisation and not intended to refuse the efforts of women who were collectively building feminist movement within the arts at the time), it certainly sheds light on women’s (particularly women of colour) isolation and alienation from institutions of art at the time. The fact that, for Keegan, isolation was augmented by prevalent images of women as primitive and pregnant purveyors of handicraft (and thus implicitly incapable of producing ‘high’ art) makes the appropriation of such potentially orientalist imagery in *People Weave a House!* yet more complicated. Furthermore, beyond the explicit

¹⁶⁴ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, pp. 30-1, 235-6.

¹⁶⁵ Rita Keegan in interview with Clare Rendell, ‘Interview: Rita Keegan talks to Clare Rendell’, *Women Artists Slide Library Journal*, 19 (October-November 1987), 10-11 (p. 10).

aesthetics of revolution and utopian desire, a closer look at the documentary images of *People Weave a House!* reveals a more subdued encounter at the ICA of, sadly, all male participants, who are somewhat thin on the ground.¹⁶⁶ This is affirmed in John A. Walker's account of the event: 'The ALF's idealistic desire to "involve the masses" was somewhat vitiated by the fact that the ICA – a private organization which required membership fees – did not attract that many visitors and the majority were artists and art students rather than industrial or office workers. Nevertheless, it was refreshing for visitors to art galleries to be able to meet and converse with artists in addition to contemplating what they had made.'¹⁶⁷ Perhaps most significantly, Dugger and Medalla have subsequently disagreed on the authorship of the work: Medalla has described it as a joint project, whereas Dugger has since criticised Medalla and also Guy Brett for (as Dugger sees it) attempting to write him out of his own work via Medalla's asserting himself as an author of the work (as opposed to a collaborator in a supporting role, as Dugger saw it).¹⁶⁸ This can be read through the documents produced at the time, which when cross-referenced with each other reflect the work's tangled authorship: in many instances Medalla features more prominently as the artist organising and liaising with the gallery, in others Medalla's name is even crossed out by hand to reflect Dugger's authorship as primary.¹⁶⁹

Dugger described the end of his collaborations with Medalla, citing what he perceived as '*systematic self-sabotage*' in relation to Medalla's various conflicts with arts professionals and galleries (in particular, Medalla exhibiting angry open letters to Tate Gallery's director Norman Reid at his shows).¹⁷⁰ In addition to the retrospective clashes between the artists surrounding the authorship of the work, accusations of sabotage, and disputed accounts of an ICA staff member

¹⁶⁶ Medalla, 'John Dugger: A collage-article', *Art and Artists*, 7.12 (March 1973), 32-37.

¹⁶⁷ John A. Walker, *Left Shift*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁸ John Dugger, personal email correspondence with the author, 5 September 2015.

¹⁶⁹ Correspondence and publicity can be found at TGA 955/7/2/50, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. Emphasis in original. Medalla's anger at Tate stemmed from a sale of his work falling through in the early 1970s.

losing a tooth after being punched in the face by Dugger during the exhibition.¹⁷¹ Clearly, then, understandings of the ‘participatory’ format here can be nuanced to account for the fact that they may not exclusively insist on harmonious and ‘consensual dialogue’, nor is the work predicated on assumptions of a central unified subject, as Bishop suggests of participatory art in the relational aesthetic vein more broadly.¹⁷² Furthermore, as John A. Walker points out, while artists engaged in concepts of participation and ‘community’ were typically characterised as ‘earnest’ and ‘arty bores’ (as we have seen in the case of Art & Language’s criticisms), such projects in the 1970s also posed antagonistic forms and potentially threatening strategies aimed at forcefully and strategically attacking the political status quo, or in the case of *People Weave a House!*, to potentially convert people to communist and socialist causes (which was regarded by establishment politicians at the time as particularly suspicious or dangerous).¹⁷³ These and related issues clearly pose problems for the modelling of a utopian collectivity, but must also be valued in their potential for considering diversity and participation as continually contested (and not blandly ‘consensual’) ground.

Both Reedy’s *Happening* and *People Weave a House!* are emblematic of the 1970s as an era in which the efforts of artists, activists, scholars, cultural workers and policy-makers to challenge white male elites galvanised with unprecedented force, and to varying degrees of success. However, these projects do not escape the overarching reality that initiatives to recognise, react and respond to feminist and other notions of diversity and inclusivity in the 1970s were, as Naseem Khan has also said, frequently clumsy, ham-fisted, or worse, as failures

¹⁷¹ ‘ICA, The Mall’, clipping from unknown source dated 22 December 1972, described how an ICA staff member ‘kicked’ at art work by Dugger, before Dugger responded with a punch to the face, TGA 955/7/2/50, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London. Medalla also reported events in this way in an article in *Art and Artists*, and ICA Secretary Jonathan Benthall wrote to the journal insisting that this had not happened. The journal later issued an apology for any ‘embarrassment’ caused; letter from Colin Naylor to Jonathan Benthall, TGA 955/7/2/50, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London; Medalla, ‘John Dugger: A collage-article’.

¹⁷² Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 25.

¹⁷³ Walker, *Left Shift*, pp. 132-3.

or unwittingly counterproductive.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, the feminist potentiality of bringing Reedy's Happening together with Medalla and Dugger's very different strategies becomes increasingly vexed the deeper the research delves, though they were colleagues and friends emerging from the same artistic and leftist countercultural milieu. For example, in Reedy's case, there is difficulty for me in understanding how to evaluate but also reach beyond questions of the artist's identity, and better articulate ways in which unified and universal subjectivities are critiqued in her work. In the case of Medalla and Dugger's *People Weave a House!*, setting aside questions of authorship, I am struck by the all the contradictions of the work, which de-centres white European histories of art, advocates collective labour and solidarity (particularly in relation to political organising of people of colour), and enables intersectional analyses of power on the one hand, but which simultaneously appears to reinforce other modes of marginalisation, on the other. For instance, the work marginalises actual women, if not their historical labours (I note here that there is no record of Helen Lai being paid for her contribution).¹⁷⁵ Archival remains of the work, such as the poster, also show potentially orientalisng representations of 'Third World' processes and aesthetics as salvation for a technological age in political crisis, and implicitly cast practices such as weaving as wholesome in their 'primitiveness'. This is also not to mention the now suspect romanticisation of militaristic and patriarchal histories of Communism.

It is clear that to seek to incorporate and resolve the problems posed by *People Weave a House!* into a single, unifying myth which claims the work *simply and straight-forwardly* as feminist would be a mistake. However, there is also a danger in sustaining polarisations which pit practices and struggles of the past against a supposedly enlightened present. For example,

¹⁷⁴ Naseem Khan speaking at 'Performance and Politics in the 1970s', Whitechapel Gallery, 30 May 2015.

¹⁷⁵ Dugger and Medalla were paid a fee, but a meagre one at £10 a week over the month of *People Weave a House!*, 'Gallery Budget: November 23 - December 22nd 1972', TGA 955/7/2/50, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

Tavia Nyong'o has identified ways in which to create oppositional distance from difficult or shame-inducing objects of the past is to implicitly work to forget racist (and sexist, homophobic, and so on) histories in a process of 'manufactured innocence'.¹⁷⁶ Nyong'o refers specifically to artistic tactics which draw on 'racist kitsch' objects of the past towards a transformative and critical 'racial kitsch' in the present. However, his theorisation also has broader potential in suggesting a mode in which we can acknowledge the criticality of artistic gestures, such as Medalla and Dugger's *People Weave a House!* poster, which hold a number of 'others' and contradictory subjectivities simultaneously. Indeed, that elements of *People Weave a House!* may be inappropriate to discourses of art history as well as contemporary feminisms recalls the confrontational presence of Minh-ha's 'Inappropriate [or Inappropriate/d] Other', which expresses a notion of difference that simultaneously draws from and subverts the 'other'.¹⁷⁷

In my reading of different, but related practices of these 'other crusaders' of the 1970s, I am interested in collapsing the kind of dichotomies that separated these ostensibly 'private' (Reedy) and 'public' (Dugger/Medalla) projects, and reactivating them in a feminist mode as part of contemporary conversations. I take my cue from Muñoz and his approach to queer feminist futurity, of 'a backward glance that enacts a future vision', and pursue the messy ephemera that characterise the feminist utopian project, 'hanging in the air like a rumor', and replete with frustrations and contradictions.¹⁷⁸ I make a feminist attempt to re/claim archival marginalia or mess which enable 'scrupulous and plausible misreadings', as characterised by Spivak, as they hold continuing potential for disrupting patriarchal patterns of power. I argue for renewed attention to ways in which collectivity, and utopian possibility, contained within the projects of 'other crusaders', and the ways in which they grate uncomfortably against and within

¹⁷⁶ Tavia Nyong'o, 'Racial Kitsch and Black Performance', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15.2 (Fall 2002), 371-391 (p. 383).

¹⁷⁷ Minh-ha, *When The Moon Waxes Red*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁸ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, pp. 4, 65.

mainstream institutions, can continue to function as critical interventions. Rather than abandoning duration or longevity as belonging only to institutions and their fixed objects, a historical enquiry into sociality and participation in performance makes evident their continuing relevance and resonance with the present, as well as the continuing importance of ‘identity’ and identification in art and interpretation.

In the context of the present Conservative government’s pursuit of a ‘big society’, where social care and responsibility is shifted away from the state, and towards volunteer, charitable, and frequently unpaid individual, domestic labour (which has catastrophic implications for women), Bishop’s warning that social, participatory, and ‘community’ art projects are in a risky position of de facto replacing shrinking social care services is timely and laudable. However, instead of seeing participation as ‘less urgent’ now (as Bishop has stated),¹⁷⁹ the questions raised by these performance works, of who participates, how, and to what end, as a constituent factors of art which can entail both individual authorship, as well as privilege collective action, resonates with more strength than ever.

Finally, I also want to take note of the significance of feminist participation in public and mainstream institutions modelled in these two examples. Cultivating alternative modes of representation and interpretation outside of hitherto ambivalent public institutions must take place, but these works also point to the importance of infiltrating institutions and claiming them as feminist stages. These examples are knotty projects for feminist interpretation, but also hold great potential for collective memory formation and subjectivation, which arises from their institutional framework. In this sense I draw on what Araeen, and other artists, activists and feminists of colour said in the 1970s, and continue to say, in the fight to enter and simultaneously alter what is accepted as mainstream and shared history, and to escape limited

¹⁷⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 198.

and limiting conceptions of being at the ‘margins’, or within a specialist subculture which is passive and at the mercy of central (patriarchal) powers.¹⁸⁰ However, questions of how to negotiate mainstream or public institutions remain crucial. As Jackson argues in her book *Social Works*, concerns about art’s absorption by either the market or the state are important, but we must also ‘imagine sustainable social institutions’, rather than abandon them by focussing on exclusively ‘anti-institutional’ positions.¹⁸¹ In the aftermath of feminist discourses which have privileged tactical absences, I argue that what might reasonably be described as the old concepts of presence, visibility and participation need revisiting. This is not in order to re-fix or re-affirm them, but to re-imagine how we play them out in feminist futures.

¹⁸⁰ Araeen, ‘Preliminary notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO’, p. 91.

¹⁸¹ Jackson, *Social Works*, pp. 14, 26.

Conclusion

The significance of what Amelia Jones calls queer feminist durationality as a politically resistant interpretive focus becomes particularly evident as one recognises feminist performance as a perpetually unfinished project. Flashbulb moments in history where the institutional mainstream is ruptured by the threat of performance as a feminist tactic would continue to be an ongoing series producing distinct but conjoined encounters at the ICA. In November 1995, an article was published in the *Daily Mail* under the headline ‘This woman performs acts of gross lewdness. Not in Soho, but at a top arts centre. You guessed it – your taxes are paying her.’¹ In the eerily familiar-sounding account, the reporter draws attention to an upcoming illustrated lecture by Annie Sprinkle (an ‘artist’ in quotation marks and ‘former prostitute’ – a ‘squalid trade’, the article notes) that was due to take place at London’s ‘controversial’ ICA.² Describing Sprinkle as a ‘voluptuous 41-year-old with long dark tresses’ the reporter mistakenly conflates Sprinkle’s works as a single, indistinct ‘naked and unashamed’ performance. Nonplussed by the idea that such live art could be taken seriously, he asks, ‘what exactly is this political statement which leads her to flaunt herself in such a shameless manner?’ “Because it is fun, [Sprinkle said] and I think fun is really important.” Gee, that is reassuringly All American. But hardly deep thinking.’ The reporter then looks for his answers elsewhere:

Lois Keidon [*sic*], the ‘live arts’ organiser at the ICA, was quoted as saying: ‘It’s a performance that articulates the politics of stripping and deals with urgent issues, the issues of peoples that are being increasingly marginalised. It relates to the real world.’

And earlier art exhibitions at the ICA relating to the real world included exhibitions of

¹ John Torode, ‘This woman performs acts of gross lewdness. Not in Soho, but at a top arts centre. You guessed it – your taxes are paying her’, *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1995, p. 27.

² Ibid.

used tampons and dirty nappies. The truth of the matter is that this sort of sick nonsense might have been shocking half a century or more ago. Today it is disgusting and degrading as ever. But not shocking. We are used to such stuff from such people. It would be shocking if an approving exhibition of, say, contemporary still lifes, or realistic water-colour scenes of sunset over St Ives, were on display. Perversely, the obscene and the shocking have become the norm in the contemporary art world. And it is the taxpayer who picks up the bill.³

The reporter's almost comically aggressive attacks of what he describes as a 'supposedly ironic political statement' complement his sexist misunderstandings of Sprinkle's project; an account strikingly reminiscent of Cosey Fanni Tutti's reception in the same paper almost two decades beforehand. As with *Prostitution* in 1976, the report in 1995 pays particular attention to the Arts Council public funding for the ICA - which is given as £800,000 a year, extended by an additional £18,000 to fund the series of which the event was part.⁴ Titled *My Body is a Temple For a Multi-Media Whore* (1995), Sprinkle's lecture included sexually explicit images and video clips of her work, some taken from pornographic films in which she starred.

As the article notes, the event was programmed as part of *Rapture* (7 November - 3 December 1995), a season of 'international performances and presentations looking at the nature of the body, ritual and sacred practice' at the ICA curated by Lois Keidan and Catherine Ugwu (then director and deputy director, respectively, of Live Arts).⁵ The season also included lectures by Marina Abramović and Fakir Musafar, a workshop for women and performance by Sacred Naked Nature Girls, and performances by Sarbjit Samra, Alan McLean and Tony Mustoe, Franko B, Ron Athey, and others working in areas related to risk, duration, body

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *ICA Bulletin*, November 1995, ICA Live Arts 1992-1997 Collection, Live Art Development Agency Study Room, London.

modification, and occult imagery. Keidan recalls with some amusement that during the season the ICA had encountered problems with ‘wankers’ (in the trench-coat ‘pervert’ tradition) who had migrated from Soho in the audiences at some of the events.⁶ ‘Full of men with macs over their laps’, the gallery then felt compelled to stipulate a no-coats-on-laps rule which they made clear during pre-show announcements. Following unwanted tabloid attention initiated by the *Daily Mail*, Keidan and other ICA staff were called to meetings with Crown Estates over their licensing, took telephone interviews with the press, and held conversations with Sprinkle (who was sympathetic) about what would be the best course of action for the season as a whole.

In the end, the event went ahead with some images (those which showed erect penises) regrettably removed. Though attended by vice unit police who presumed to make remarks as to the ‘taste’ of the evening, they chose not to press charges. Ironically, Keidan reflects on the tabloid furore as having its benefits, as Sprinkle (who could ‘handle it’) ‘took the heat’ away from other performances in the series; particularly as Keidan was aware that Ron Athey was likely to (and did) perform acts which were illegal (‘beyond illegal’, Keidan says) as part of his new work *Deliverance* (1995).⁷ It is important to note that this is a historical context in which Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 – which banned local authorities from promoting, or publishing material which ‘promotes’, homosexuality – was still in place.⁸ Symbolic of prevailing discrimination against, and stigmatisation of, homosexuality, particularly in the midst of the AIDS crisis, the clause was only repealed in Scotland and the rest of the UK in 2000 and 2003, respectively.⁹

⁶ Lois Keidan, interview with the author, London, 20 January 2016.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Local Government Act 1988 <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/28>> [accessed 12 February 2016].

⁹ Ibid.

Sprinkle's episode recalls the moral panic surrounding *Prostitution*, but also other indicative examples in the histories discussed in this thesis: particularly Charlotte Moorman's run-ins with obscenity law enforcement, the reception by a 'red jowled General' of Carolee Schneemann as a 'demented frigid nymphomaniac',¹⁰ gendered assumptions of artistic and intellectual deficiency illuminated by the 'women's season', and enduring dismissals of 'other crusaders' as I explained in relation to Carlyle Reedy and David Medalla.

However, the cultural landscape has of course changed substantially by the mid-1990s. From a feminist perspective, as Angela McRobbie notes, the early 1990s saw ever-expanding debates about how feminism might develop, and a rising disaffiliation from feminist histories, resulting in the 'postfeminist' cultural space that she describes via its mainstream manifestations such as the Spice Girls (who formed in 1994) 'girl power', and ironic (or as McRobbie argues, repudiatory) re-workings of earlier feminist ideas.¹¹ To illustrate his judgement about the way in which live art is now taken seriously (and mistakenly, he suggests) the *Daily Mail* reporter points to Sprinkle's participation in a previous ICA and touring show, *Bad Girls* (ICA, 7 October - 5 December 1993). Again, with supplementary funding from the Arts Council, curators from the ICA (including those in Live Arts but also across departments such as exhibitions director Emma Dexter) collaborated with staff at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (previously named Third Eye Centre) to produce the interdisciplinary exhibition.¹² *Bad Girls* seems particularly relatable to the 'postfeminist' context described by McRobbie. In her introduction of the zine-style catalogue published after the exhibition's run at the ICA, 'writer-in-residence' Deborah Levy notes, '[it] is true that there is a rebellion against the pleasure-less decorum and puritanism of the 70s in feminist aesthetics, but there is also a

¹⁰ Carolee Schneemann, letter to Jan Van der Marck 29 July 1968, in *Correspondence Course*, ed. by Kristine Stiles (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 137-138 (p. 138).

¹¹ Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 15.

¹² *Bad Girls*, exh. cat. (London: ICA, London 1994).

weariness, a kind of burn out and boredom with the cool, theoretical, cynical, deconstructivist 80s'.¹³ The exhibition included sculpture, painting, photography, video, talks, and performances by women working in a wide range of forms, including artists Nicole Eisenman, Helen Chadwick, Nan Goldin, Sue Williams, Lydia Lunch, Sadie Benning, Annie Sprinkle, and Penny Arcade, as well as a collection of riot grrrl posters and *The Bad Girl Party* co-hosted by Jo Brand. In her summary of the events, Levy highlights themes including ironic relationships to capitalism, rebelliousness (particularly in riot grrrl as an iteration of DIY punk), and what we might now call – after José Esteban Muñoz's usage – disidentificatory practices relating to 'simple minded', 'glib', and 'passé' characterisations of women.¹⁴ Dramatically extending the thematic and formal scope of (and challenges made by) the 'women's season', criss-crossing histories and duplications are also evident: Levy accounts for one visitor's astute observation that '[this] event should be called Bad White Girls – how come there are no black contributors in the exhibition?'¹⁵

While the ICA (particularly, it seems, the exhibitions departments) continued to struggle or fail to sufficiently address issues of social, cultural and political diversity, promising initiatives were being undertaken; particularly in live art. Keidan and Ugwu's contribution to the curation of *Bad Girls* events was undertaken in tandem with other seasons designed to challenge 'prevailing social attitudes', and to diversify artist but also audience representation.¹⁶ For example, as part of their *Respect* season, they curated and commissioned new performance works by Black British artists Stuart Taylor, Susan Lewis (subsequently known as Subassa Imani Lewis), Ronald Fraser-Munroe, SuAndi and Maya Chowdhry. However, cultivating diversity was still very difficult (even more difficult than today, Keidan adds). For

¹³ Deborah Levy, 'Introduction', in *Bad Girls*, exh. cat., p. 2.

¹⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 4-5, 15; *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *ICA Bulletin*, October 1993, ICA Live Arts 1992-1997 Collection, Live Art Development Agency, London.

instance, Keidan recalls some disastrous and embarrassing audience turn-outs early on in her directorship at performances and talks by leading black, queer, and feminist artists (such as Carmelita Tropicana) whom she had invited from abroad, and particularly from the US, which was especially active as a site for influential new developments in performance practice relating to identity politics at the time.¹⁷ Challenges of tackling this included, she says: white or straight audiences failing to see how work by black or queer artists might be relevant and interesting to them; ‘striking a balance between supporting a community but also trying to [...] extend the debates and issues beyond those communities of interest’; to ‘break that sense of exclusion and elitism that the ICA gave out to the world – to really try to open it up to artists coming from different cultural backgrounds’; to promote interdisciplinarity and collaboration between programming departments (which was not an easy or consistently fulfilled task, Keidan notes); and to create awareness about what live art could offer artists accustomed to more traditional forms.¹⁸ Strategies they employed included establishing *The Ripple Effect*, which was designed to give emerging artists a platform for new work, close collaboration with the talks department (directed at the time by Alan Read) to create and cultivate discursive frameworks for contemporary practice, commissioning as well as hosting touring performances, and focussing on actively developing coherent curated seasons, series, and policies. As part of a quartet of key venues also including Third Eye Centre / Centre for Contemporary Arts Glasgow, Greenroom (Manchester), and Arnolfini (Bristol), during this time the ICA became a major site of what has now been acknowledged as an important period for live art in the UK and internationally.¹⁹

However, as I note in my introduction, the story of performance at the ICA has an unsatisfying ending. Keidan and Ugwu both left the institution in difficult circumstances in 1997

¹⁷ Keidan, interview with the author.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jennie Klein, ‘Developing Live Art’, in *Histories and Practices of Live Art*, ed. by Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 12-36 (pp. 23-4).

along with, or soon followed by, the majority of the other programming staff after Philip Dodd was appointed ICA director. Keidan attributes this in part to untenable conflicts which emerged over curatorial policy; in contrast to the creative contexts that Keidan and Ugwu had worked to cultivate, on his arrival Dodd had suggested that Miriam Margolyes' mainstream-friendly adaptation *Dickens' Women* (1989) emblematised the kind of work they should be showing.²⁰ Later, conflicts intensified around the increasing proportion and type of corporate funding sought by the institution, in the midst of dubious comments made by the gallery's executive management about contemporary art. For example, a Conservative party member whose background is in entrepreneurial, gay market-focussed finance, Ivan Massow was appointed as Chairman of the ICA in 1999, and published an opinion piece in the *New Statesman* making sweeping general claims. Contemporary art at that point in time (particularly as influenced by histories of conceptual art) was, he said, 'all hype', and 'rather piss-poor compared to the brilliant and explosive interventions of our modernist forebears', a critique he offered alongside other outrageous (and sexist) suggestions such as that Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1999) was actually authored by Charles Saatchi (Emin, he said, 'couldn't think her way out of a paper bag').²¹

In 2008, controversy erupted around the live art programming unit (by then renamed Live & Media Arts) when a leaked email from Ekow Eshun (then the Artistic Director since 2005) justified its closure on the grounds that this area of contemporary practice 'lacks depth and cultural urgency'.²² Keidan clarifies that Eshun may actually have been referring specifically to the 'media arts' arm (and that this was in her view even more short-sighted in the digital age), but Eshun's regrettable comments and decisions produced a justified backlash amongst artists,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ivan Massow, 'Why I Hate Our Official Art', *New Statesman*, 21 January 2002 <<http://www.newstatesman.com/node/194309>> [accessed 12 February 2016].

²² Lyn Gardner, 'Ekow Eshun and the ICA's death blow to live art', *Guardian*, 23 October 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/oct/23/ica-live-arts-closure>> [accessed 18 March 2013].

critics, and scholars of live art.²³ Memorably, artists Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells responded to the closure with *True Riches* (2009), their ‘imaginary season’ of talks, screenings and performances at the ICA. *True Riches* was an artwork in the form of a wish-list events programme designed to reflect the range of exciting live art and related practices in the UK. The work was never destined to be performed (though it was received by some of the programmed artists and audiences as real, with the ICA box office receiving calls for bookings at the time), and the programme is preserved online.²⁴

As we can see here and in other examples discussed in this thesis, mythologies of radicalism and controversy at the ICA have been produced and sustained with fertile intent, but also unhelpful, or indeed counter-productive effects. The histories detailed above have recently re-emerged in the press. In 2016, the current director Gregor Muir articulated a renewed interest in fostering new and experimental contemporary practices at the ICA, arguing that ‘[f]inding a real sub-culture is more important now than just calling something the new “avant-garde”. We need to hear a voice from cultures that are not represented well elsewhere.’²⁵ While laudable in theory, Muir’s invocations of the ‘avant-garde’ and ‘subcultural’ are stilted in a context in which the ICA appears to buttress its own claims to radicalism mostly through its (increasingly rigid and reified, it seems) past histories. The institution does indeed benefit from interesting art historical research and initiatives, such as by current collaborative doctoral award PhD scholar Lucy Bayley (based also at Middlesex University), who recently prompted and

²³ Keidan, interview with the author.

²⁴ Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells, *True Riches* (2009) <<http://www.anthampton.com/trueriches.html>> [accessed 12 February 2016].

²⁵ Vanessa Thorpe, ‘Wanted: bright young things to form Britain’s new avant-garde’, *Guardian*, 24 January 2016, <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/jan/24/british-artists-new-avant-garde-ica-damien-hirst>> [accessed 12 February 2016].

informed an archival exhibition *Art ↔ Society* (1972).²⁶ However, it appears that other, much smaller advocacy and artist-led organisations and individuals working in increasingly temporary and underfunded spaces take on the responsibilities of fostering new and potentially risky work in emerging art forms. In live art and related fields in London, certainly Keidan's co-founding (with Ugwu) of the Live Art Development Agency in 1999, the establishment of organisations such as the artists' moving image agency LUX in 2002, the ongoing (but peripheral, relative to the ICA) producing work of Artsadmin and Chisenhale Dance Space, and artist-led (and frequently homeless) initiatives such as]performance s p a c e[and Duckie create and comprise active but institutionally neglected (or actively anti-institutional) contexts for new work.

Criss-crossing temporalities, between then, now, and in-between, enriches our understandings of practices in history, but also – the crucial component that tends to escape the ICA as an institution, it seems – the present situation, and the futures of art and performance more broadly. Indeed, the histories that I have depicted evidently leak out far beyond the neat compartment of 'the 1970s'. As I note in the introduction, while I have selected key artists or art works in this thesis as case studies for identifying and thinking through issues of feminism and art and performance at the ICA in the 1970s, this thesis begins to represent only a fraction of the practices in or related to points of intersection between these areas. Though the historical narrative I construct is necessarily incomplete and wilfully non-linear, I have aimed to interweave some of the major contributions made within or alongside feminist art and criticism during this time, which remain urgently relevant to contemporary practice today. Major conceptual nodes around which they cluster include: the body in performance as a battleground between naturalised, essentialist notions of identities on the one hand, and feminist

²⁶ 'Art into Society – Society into Art, 19 Jan 2016 – 6 Mar 2016', Institute of Contemporary Arts <<https://www.ica.org.uk/whats-on/art-society-society-art>> [accessed 12 February 2016]; Lucy Bayley, personal correspondence with the author.

accounts of them as constructed, artificial, and theatrical on the other; institutional critique, particularly in relation to notions of canonisation, historicity, formal categorisation, and inclusivity; and feminist modes of infidelity, which includes transgressions against dominant unitary logics and strategies of representation and interpretation in art, but also against and within multiple feminist positions and histories. With the latter, I have looked to move beyond the familiar caricatures of women artists in performance as raging, perverse, naïve and narcissistic, by beginning to account for the artists and works' relevance beyond gender-specificity, their criticality, and their sophisticated, complex, and considerable achievements. I propose future research into modes of feminist infidelity which ripple across areas of artistic, scholarly, and other practice, but which are also, I argue, concentrated in the embodied and indeed disembodied spaces of performance. Finally, archives should not be 'off limits' to us as repositories of patriarchal and capitalist investments. We should be re-fashioning what constitutes archival information, what kinds of histories can be produced with them, and who has access to them. While retaining criticality about the 'official' or 'mainstream' cultures of institutions, it seems urgent not to abandon feminist projects of visibility in our fight to continue to alter shared tenets, politics, and principles of cultures and societies.

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Women's Art Library (MAKE), Goldsmiths Library Special Collections, Goldsmiths,
University of London

Illustrations



Fig. 1. Allen Jones, *Chair* (1969)



Fig. 2. Rose Garrard, *Beyond Still Life* (ICA, 1980)



Fig. 3. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *The Restless Image: A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position* (ca. 1975)



Fig. 4. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *One For Sorrow Two For Joy* (Acme Gallery, 1976)



Fig. 5. Carolee Schneemann, *Naked Action Lecture* (ICA, 1968)

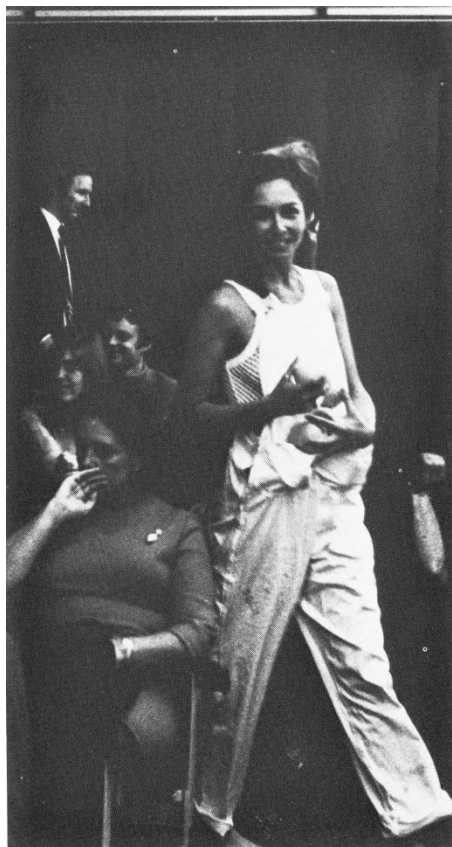


Fig. 6. Carolee Schneemann, *Naked Action Lecture* (ICA, 1968)



Fig. 7. Charlotte Moorman, *Instrumental Music* (stills from unpublished video by Fred Stern, *Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde*, 1980)



Fig. 8. Sho Kazakura performing *Stuff Comes from Somewhere and Goes Somewhere* (foreground), and Takehisa Kosugi performing *Chamber Music/Anima 2* (background) at the 15th Yomiuri Independent Exhibition, Tokyo (1963)

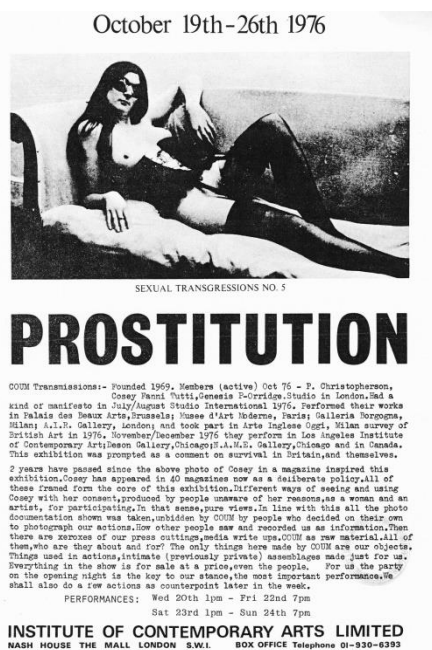


Fig. 9. COUM Transmissions, *Prostitution* (1976)



Fig. 10. Cosey Fanni Tutti as 'The Office Cleaner', one of the *Magazine Actions* (1973-77)



Fig. 11. Cosey Fanni Tutti as 'Geraldine', one of the *Magazine Actions* (1973-77)



Fig. 12. Carlyle Reedy preparing for *Fish Event* (Royal Court Theatre, London, 1970)



Fig. 13. John Dugger, *Star-Weaving Jig* (1972)

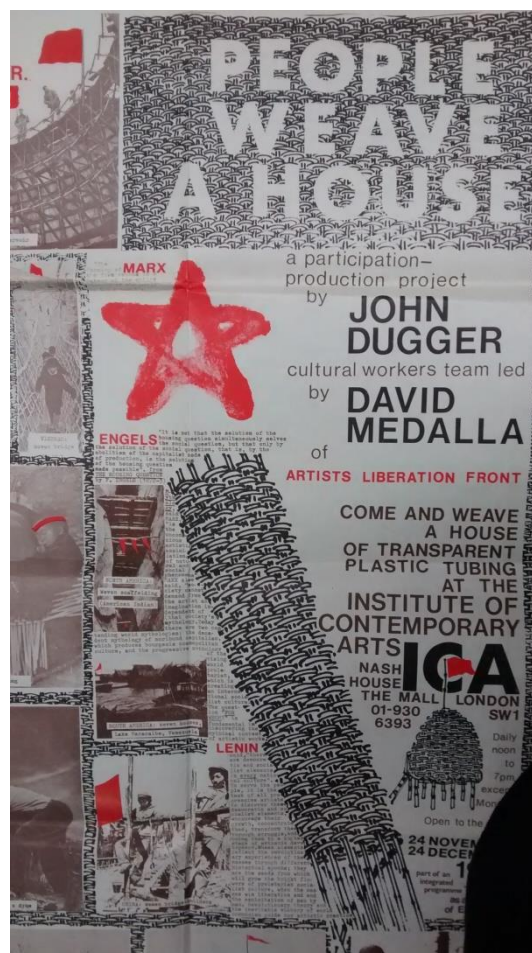


Fig. 14. *People Weave a House!* (1972) poster by John Dugger and David Medalla